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ON THE TRAIL
OF THE BUSHONGO



A BUSHONGO CHIEF OF THE ISAMBO SUB-TRIBE.

He wears his hair dressed to imitate buffalo's horns after the ancient fashion.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE BUSHONGO

AN ACCOUNT OF A REMARKABLE & HITHERTO UNKNOWN
AFRICAN PEOPLE, THEIR ORIGIN, ART, HIGH SOCIAL
& POLITICAL ORGANIZATION & CULTURE,
DERIVED FROM THE AUTHOR'S PERSONAL
EXPERIENCE AMONGST THEM

BY

E. TORDAY

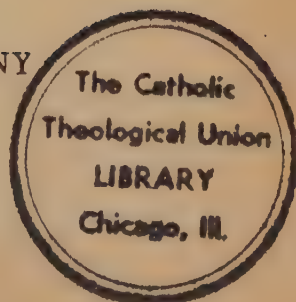
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AUTHOR OF "CAMP & TRAMP IN AFRICAN WILDS"
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WITHDRAWN

WITH 59 ILLUSTRATIONS & A MAP

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TO
THE MEMORY OF
KWETE

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On the Trail of the Bushongo

CHAPTER I

COAST IMPRESSIONS—A CANNIBAL CREW

I HAD been travelling a good number of years about Central Africa before it dawned on me that my peregrinations had taken me by pure accident through the pages of a nation's history. The chapters had got a little muddled, the fourth preceding the third, but I shall give them to my readers in the same order in which I happened to read them. Historians generally rely for their information on books, manuscripts and inscriptions preserved by accident from the onslaught of centuries ; my documents were, to a small extent, tribal traditions, but mainly the living people themselves. Such documents require gentle handling, and cannot be searched at the will of the student ; the opportunities missed by want of experience could not be retrieved, not only because of the wide fields I covered in my journeys, but also because every year of European penetration sees more of the native customs destroyed. Consequently my book has no pretensions to being a scientific treatise ; it is a simple account of what I have seen, and, if it appears now and then egotistical, the reader will bear in mind that observations have to be

judged according to the mood of the person who makes them. There is perhaps more of me in those parts of the book, in which I speak of other people, than in those in which I am the principal actor.

For more than a quarter of a century it has been generally believed that the mystery of the Dark Continent has been solved; people visiting coast towns, or centres of European administration in the interior, received readily the impression that the country had permanently bowed its head before our victorious civilisation. Everything runs smoothly—till the unexpected that Aristotle taught us always to expect from Africa, happens, and it suddenly dawns on the traveller that under a varnish of order and progress there still persists that savage Africa of which we were told by the great travellers who opened up the continent. How could it be otherwise? Nature, human or otherwise, knows no leaps and bounds. This difficulty of the nations who have partitioned Africa has not always been sufficiently appreciated, and the men who struggle on the spot against it do not often get the credit they deserve. Recent events near our own homes have shown us with what ease a civilised people can, under unfavourable conditions, wipe out a thousand years of its history; what, then, is one to expect from tribes who less than half a century ago practised cannibalism openly, and to whom the civilised world was represented by the slave-trader?

I was allowed to keep my illusions for several months, which I spent in the Lower Congo and at Kinchasa, the commercial suburb of Leopoldville and the principal town of the “regions beyond.” There was little apparent barbarism left, and that little was not

conspicuous. It was a rising town, with a white population of several hundreds, a railway connecting it with the coast, and a shipyard where craft of considerable tonnage were built ; electric lighting of the town was contemplated and the first steps for its sanitation had been taken ; there were stores, missions, hospitals, churches, courts of law, a prison, a military band, etc.—in one word, the white man had made his mark on the place. Not half an hour's walk from the town were native villages, governed by potentates like Selembao and N'Galiema, where, although mixed to some extent with the worst of European customs, the life of the black man was the same as it had been before the advent of the white conqueror, with this main difference that ceremonies, clashing with the ideals of the new overlord, were now performed in secrecy instead of openly as before. There never was a fear of betrayal among the negroes : no man, a native of the place, would have "split" on another belonging to his race. If a crime were committed by a chief, or a man of importance, and were found out by the authorities of the Congo State, some volunteer of a lower social order would take the responsibility on himself, get punished, and thus shelter the real culprit, who escaped without the slightest inconvenience to himself. Slaves would voluntarily suffer even capital punishment in place of the man they considered their rightful chief, and the whole country knew, kept silent, and rejoiced at any similar trick played on Bula Matadi, by which name the state authorities were known. This was not caused by any particular dislike for the men who represented the new order of things, it was simply a

last stand for the old-established customs by a race that refused to die without kicking. It is obvious that under these circumstances the sitting of a court of law, when a native was being tried, and the conviction depended on native evidence, became a mere farce, and must have seemed comic to the new-comer. Every man stood up for his tribesman, and if necessary went joyously to prison for perjury or contempt of court, his conscience satisfied by the knowledge of having done the right thing. But for any kindly spectator it was deeply pathetic to see the struggle between personal interest and the interest of the tribe, and how the imaginary duty towards their own kin invariably carried the day ; for these "savages" suffered gladly for an ideal they had set themselves : the absolute solidarity of the black race against the white intruder. There were signs of great possibilities in this ; it was only a question of impressing these men with new, and worthier, ideals to turn them into citizens admirably prepared to fulfil their civic duties. And if one compares their conduct, their ungrudging readiness to sacrifice freedom, money, nay, their very lives, for the good of the community, with the sordid selfishness of politicians of civilised communities—but I know nothing of Europe, so I had better stick to Africa.

As I often had to go to Leopoldville and liked roaming on the river for sport, I bought the swiftest little dug-out on the river ; like all of her kind she was carved out of a solid trunk of a sort of mahogany tree, called *mopelenge*, with exceptionally thin walls and a perfect, graceful shape. To manage the little craft one man would have been sufficient, but her

maximum load consisted of a crew of eight and one passenger ; when thus loaded her edge was brought within two inches of the water and she was a decidedly dangerous boat for the unpractised. I had engaged a crew of fifteen Sango, people from the Upper Ubangi river ; perfect savages, but excellent paddlers. I often raced in her some of the smaller French steamers across the Stanley Pool, and more often than not I won, to the great joy of my crew, a fine lot of men, beautifully built, all muscle, not an ounce of fat, and in the prime of condition.

These Sango were very primitive, and their ideas of relative values were especially curious. Thus, one of them, called Djakwa, came one day to me saying that he was tired of a bachelor's life and asked my permission to visit a neighbouring market, so that he might buy a slave to be his wife. It was no good trying to explain to him that slaves were not sold openly in the market of Leopoldville, as they may have been at that time in the Ubangi region : he refused to believe that such a state of affairs could exist. When I asked him if he possessed goods enough to pay for a wife or a slave, he grinned proud assent. On being requested to produce them he brought forth a package carefully bound up in a banana leaf. The envelope being removed revealed to my astonished eyes a piece of a broken looking-glass, about four inches square in size. Advice was of no avail, so I let him go to learn by experience. When he came back, a wiser man, he still owned his bit of mirror, for it had been refused by the market people even in payment for a single banana !

“ In my village,” he said, “ none but the richest

owned a similar jewel, which would show a man his own face, and those who were the lucky owners of one could hire it out to their friends, so that they too might delight themselves with the contemplation of their features. My father, the chief, wears one on his chest on festive occasions, and he gave a big tusk of ivory for it to the trader who sold it to him."

My house in Kinchasa was a good hour's walk from Leopoldville. Quite a number of other people lived there, and, as only one train went daily to town, "boys" were sent continuously to Leo (as the town had been named for short) with letters and other communications. "Boy," of course, means, as all people in Africa know, the servant of a white man, whatever be his age. When a boy, who came from the coast and consequently had a varnish of civilisation, was sent to fetch, say, a bottle of spirits, it sometimes happened that, forgetful of his duty, he would sample the precious contents of the bottle, and then, when he had slept off the effects of his misdeed, he would, naturally, not dare to face his master, but would cross the Pool in the canoe of a friend or an accomplice, and go into French territory, thus putting himself beyond the reach of retribution. Of course, should his master pay a visit to a French friend and accidentally meet the guilty party in a solitary lane, the unexpected, in the form of a good thrashing, might happen; the possibilities of this were, however, too problematical to deter any inveterate drunkard from appropriating his master's liquor, if there was a chance of doing so. Similar villainies were never committed by people from the interior; to begin with, theft from one's own master is against

their moral code ; then the spirit, in the guise of alcohol, did not tempt them, and finally, they did not understand such things as frontiers, and the proximity of French territory was of no use to them. In their minds all white men were brethren who loved each other dearly and acted in perfect accord ; only after a prolonged contact with civilisation did they realise the fact that white men living in the tropics and suffering from bad livers sometimes happened to have trifling disagreements.

When a "civilised" messenger, sent to town, disappeared, this was usually attributed to desertion, caused by the fear that some misdeed of his had been discovered ; but when a number of men, fresh from the interior, vanished, that was quite a different matter. These people, hundreds of miles from their own homes, if they did run away, had no place to go to, and their absence could not be explained. The natives themselves became suspicious and refused to go alone to Leo, and when they did go they preferred to do so in groups and armed with "matchets" (cutlasses) or other lethal weapons. The more messengers disappeared the more did people suspect evil influences, and ghost stories were at a premium.

One afternoon two friends of mine suggested that we should go to town and inquire if anything had been discovered about the latest disappearances, and, having given leave to my Sango paddlers (who usually took me to town in my dug-out), we walked there along the railway track. After sunset we were returning by a native path, and had just passed Kalina point, which is about half-way between Leo and Kinchasa, when suddenly we heard shouts for help. As fast

as we could we ran to the spot, whence the appeal came, and there we found a man in a dying condition, a messenger who to our knowledge had been sent on an errand to town. By the trail in the high grass we could see that he had been attacked on the path and then dragged into the bush ; no traces of his assailants were visible. The poor wretch tried to speak, but was too weak from loss of blood and soon became unconscious. Leaving my friends with him I ran home, and finding my Sango asleep in their huts got them to prepare an improvised stretcher to fetch the patient. We arrived, however, too late ; we found the victim had been dead for some time. He had never regained consciousness, and my friends who had stayed with him had not been able to get any information out of him. The mournful procession returned to the village of the murdered man and the magistrate was at once informed of the crime.

Many natives and all the Europeans turned up next day for the funeral, and military honours were rendered to the poor fellow as if he had fallen in action. Great good it did him ! When we reached the native cemetery it was found that the grave prepared for him was too short, and a spade had to be sent for to make it the necessary size. After the funeral the white men met in one of the factories and held a council. There was general agreement on one point : it was no good relying on the local magistrate and we would have to take matters into our own hands. Magistrates were not popular ; not that the residents had any criminal propensities, and resented being restrained by the representatives of law and order, but simply because at this early period of the Belgian

colony the magistrates were often chosen from briefless young lawyers, who suffered considerably from swelled head when they suddenly found themselves in their important positions. Ignorant of native customs and local conditions they very often became a nuisance to everybody. There were others, brilliant young men who adapted themselves quickly enough, but they naturally had to overcome the prejudices their less intelligent colleagues had aroused.

We "old hands" (why, there was a fellow amongst us who was over thirty!) now discussed matters. All sorts of theories were advanced; highway men, Thugs, goodness knows what. A man, who had just come down from the Equator district, said it was obvious that the men had been eaten, but we laughed at this ridiculous idea. A man eaten near Leopoldville! He was going to tell us the sort of things that happened daily near his place, but we silenced him; we had heard these traveller's yarns before and knew what they were worth. The question was: What were we going to do? Several propositions, each more ridiculous or impossible than the others, were made; the only reasonable one came from me (it always does): I suggested that we should scout the country with the aid of my Sangos, who, fresh from their native haunts, were undoubtedly suited for the rôle of bloodhounds. However, nothing was decided, and we arranged to meet again the next day in the afternoon.

Many hours before the time fixed for the meeting we were urgently summoned by one of the residents. This man on the previous day had lent a spade to enlarge the grave, and this implement had been forgotten in the cemetery; consequently in the

morning he sent a boy to fetch it, but the messenger came back shortly afterwards and, trembling with excitement, told his master that the corpse had walked away with the spade ! I had better not repeat the names his master called him for his folly, but when he refused to retract, the European went to ascertain what had frightened the man out of his wits, and in the cemetery he found to his amazement that the body had in fact disappeared ; it did not take him long to ascertain that it had been cut up before its removal. When we were told this we no longer derided the man who had suggested cannibalism ; the evidence was overwhelming. Now, how could we catch the cannibals ? Again suggestion after suggestion was made, mine being the best though I cannot remember what it was ; I know however it was rejected. After a lot of talk we separated and waited for an inspiration.

Days passed and it did not come. I was sitting one morning with the Sango crew, discussing the matter with them and encouraging them to make practical suggestions. They attributed the murders and the removal of the corpse to evil spirits and to witchcraft ; the idea of cannibals being at work was scorned by them. They declared themselves ready to scout the country day and night if only I would provide them with arms.

While we were talking the local magistrate called on me ; he was, as usual, on his rounds, accompanied by soldiers ; he seemed to have more than the usual number, a precaution quite justified by recent events. I just started chaffing him on his incapacity to elucidate the last crime when there was a scuffle,

and turning round I found the Sango fighting the soldiers who tried to handcuff them. Indignantly I asked the magistrate what he meant by this unwarrantable assault. He explained to me that one of my gentle paddlers had the day before given some meat to a lady friend and that she had recognised it as being human flesh. She informed the trader for whom her husband worked, and this man had brought the news to the magistrate. We now went to search the men's huts and there we found, not only the missing spade, but also other awful proofs of their guilt. A few minutes later they were marched off to jail.

This was "the unexpected" that came to me and stirred me up. It was a palpable proof that at any rate some of the backwoodsmen's tales were true; cannibals were a stern reality. A few days later news came of a defeat inflicted on slave raiders in the south; and I had thought that the slave trade had been dead for years! All this made me long to go and see the real wilds before they became tamed: real cannibals, real savages, real slavers; I was at the door of all this and had never thought of having a look at it! I at once applied to be sent up-country, and, with youth's love of extremes I asked to be transferred to the farthest spot I could detect on the map; and it is thus that I came to the Great Lakes. On my journey I had only one anxiety: Would I be in time? I was.

CHAPTER II

ADVENTURERS—"DIRTY JIM"

AT this time the south-eastern part of the Congo State was in a state of transition. The rule of the Arabs had been broken by the campaign of 1892-1893, but it was followed by a succession of mutinies which had the gravest consequences and sometimes put the white man's supremacy in danger. The offenders were Batetela soldiers, never very many, but the character of the country and the help they received from friendly tribes made them formidable. One part of them tried to join with the mutinous troops in Uganda and to organise a general rising of black against white, and they very nearly succeeded in doing so. Let those who advocate the indiscriminate arming of African levies remember that. The others went southwards, crossed the frontier and, provided with ammunition by Portuguese slave traders, made inroads into the territory of the Free State, leaving behind them a trail of blood and desolation. It was not until 1901 that they were finally defeated. The scene of their principal exploits was at this time made the subject of a new experiment by the Congo State: it was leased to a chartered company, the Comité Spécial du Katanga, with the intention of making it into a model territory; one of the reasons for doing

so was to keep away the adventurers whom the discovery of gold always attracts, and who are in great part recruited from the least desirable enterprising spirits of all countries. This was successful, though not without some attempts on the part of the knights of fortune to cross the barrier erected against them. There was poor Rabinek, an Austrian. When he found the country barred to him, and saw that it was impossible to stake out claims, he took to trading and one day found himself arrested for smuggling. The legality of his arrest has been disputed, and I will not discuss it, as it has nothing to do with my narrative. I met Rabinek, as he was going to Boma to appeal against his sentence. The poor man was a morphinomaniac and suffered agonies when he found himself suddenly deprived of his usual drug. I gave him the little I possessed, so did everybody else ; but he could not get enough for his craving, and this deprivation finished his enfeebled body off. He died on the way to the West Coast.

Then there was Schumann. He carried on a legitimate trade, but at the same time supplied the mutineers occasionally with ammunition. When he was found out, he escaped punishment for two reasons : one was that he had rendered some service to the vice-governor when hard up for provisions for his expedition, and the other that the memory of Stokes was still alive, and Belgian officials were not keen on picking a quarrel with another Great Power. Sir Harry Johnston has given Stokes a good character, but General Lugard, in his *Rise of our East African Empire* (Vol. II, pp. 63, 64) shows him to have been a dangerous man, as ready to trade in war material with

enemies of his own country as he did with the enemies of the Belgians. At any rate, the Belgians did not want another "Affaire Stokes"; so Schumann was called by the Commanding Officer of the expedition, and it was explained to him that he would have to leave the Congo Free State. "As you helped me when I was hard up, I will help you now; tell me whither you want to go and you shall be given all possible facilities. Will you go into German territory?"

The man said he would rather not; he had had some trouble with the German authorities, and their tribunals were so unpleasantly expeditious . . .

"What about the French Congo?"

Schumann grinned. No, he did not want to go to French territory; he had been there before, and though the authorities did want him he did not want them.

"Well, there is Angola, a good place for a man of your enterprising spirit?"

Goodness, no! He was fed up with the Portuguese. They had treated him very badly; they had faked up a charge against him and he did not want to spend the rest of his days (and the Portuguese warders would see to it that there would not be too many of them) in the penal settlement of Lorenzo Marques. He would rather go somewhere else.

The Colonel pointed out to him that there was no other place to go to except British territory, and he assumed from what had been whispered . . .

Schumann waved his hand disparagingly: quite so; no need to talk about it.

Finally, he was sent to the coast and thence to the

Canary Islands ; that was the last that we ever heard of him.

I liked Dirty Jim best. Few Europeans have seen him, and he carefully avoided their company. He did not come officially to the Free State ; he travelled incognito, as he went incognito to all the places he honoured with his visits, and he had a perfect horror of magistrates and such-like people. His dealings were exclusively with the natives ; nobody could tell what they were. He avoided not only every white settlement, but even the roads European travellers frequented were taboo to him. I came upon him unexpectedly one day when I had lost my way and was following a half-obliterated track. He was sitting on the ground surrounded by a gang of native ruffians, all armed with modern rifles. He jumped up and asked :

“ Who are you and what are you doing here ? ”

These were not his exact words, he expressed himself more forcibly, in language more highly coloured. It was very refreshing after weeks and months alone amongst natives who are so monotonously polite. When he saw I had only two men with me he took his hand off his revolver and offered me a drink. He told me his name was James, Mr. James ; a gentleman by profession ; he was on a sporting tour. He said all this with a knowing grin ; he knew that his appearance belied every word he said, and he obviously did not want me to think that he was trying to deceive me ; he was just joking. His question, if I had ever heard of him I had to answer in the negative, whereupon he remarked casually that, “ My friends generally call me Dirty Jim—but never to my face.” Under that

name I had heard of him indeed, but believed him to be an imaginary person something like the Flying Dutchman. He was always talked of as a desperate character, up to some dirty game (hence his name), but there was nothing definite known against him. The natives seemed to fear him for his terrible fits of temper; when these came on him he was out for blood. On the other hand, they loved him, hid him, and screened him for some unknown reason. At any rate, he had severed himself completely from the people of his own race without running “Fanti” and adopting native ways. He was obviously English, talked English without an accent, but rather slowly as if remembering the words with difficulty; when he told me that he had not seen a white man for nearly two years, and not ten within the last fifteen, this became comprehensible. The only words that came easily were swear words, and with these he freely spiced his conversation, which was rather refined, more like the written than the spoken word. In the usual way I asked him whence he came and whither he was bound. He pushed his chin forward as he answered: “I come from the blue and am going to h——,” which answer did not court any further inquiries. However, we parted on quite good terms. Within the next few years I heard once or twice of him and then he escaped my memory. I may just as well tell here how I met him once more, many hundred miles away.

Usually a white man's presence is known all over the country, and in the Batetela country quicker than anywhere else, because these people are the great masters of transmitting news by gongs. The instru-

ment they use, shaped like a hollow wedge, can emit six different sounds, and with these the natives speak. I use the word on purpose. Naturally, there is something like a syllabic alphabet, but this is not analysed by the drummer or by those who “listen in”; the transmitted sound talks just as the mouth does. The drum has a real language, and its resemblance to the human voice is striking at a distance. But no drum had talked, and this was probably due to the fact that Dirty Jim was doing some business with the natives, which was strictly private among themselves. Then he suddenly turned up and told us he had been hunting for treasure. It had been reported that, during the Arab invasion, a Mutetela chief had buried his huge stock of ivory, and he and his tribe being exterminated by Rashid on one of his raiding expeditions, the treasure was untouched, waiting for a lucky person to find it. He set out to hunt for it. He went with six natives, who carried a mat, which was to serve him as a bed, a few cooking utensils, rifles, a lot of ammunition and a few spades. He had no provisions: he was going to live by his rifle and on the country. When he wanted help, he was going to press the natives in to do the job; he was a past master in that art. He came back in an awful condition, and emaciated to such a degree that I scarcely recognised him. He had done pretty well and brought back a good lot of ivory he had shot, but his search for the treasure had been in vain. I was glad to see him, because for the past years we had given him up for lost. We exchanged the news of the day, and among other things I told him that a few miles from the camp a mission had been established. Dirty

Jim hated missions and missionaries, and declared that their presence made the place impossible for him ; he would shift his chattels as soon as possible and go farther, “ to some place where he was safe from that vermin.” Then I mentioned that the missionary had brought his wife with him. That came as a shock to him ; for twenty years, he said, he had seen no white woman ; what was the country coming to now that even they were invading it ! He had better clear out at once.

Yet, with all his professed aversion for the ladies, he now and then asked questions about this woman ; trying hard to appear indifferent, he never tired of listening to us when we talked of her, and when we left the subject, would return to it with all sorts of questions at most unexpected moments. At night he came to my tent and woke me to inquire if the missionary had everything the lady required, and again at four o'clock in the morning he returned to ask if her hair was fair or dark. It was obvious to me that he was just dying to see the white woman. I took pity on him and, to put him at his ease, told him that it was his duty to pay a visit to the mission. He told me that he would see me in a very hot place first. I dropped the subject. Poor Jim, I really believe he was disappointed, and that he hoped that I would insist more strongly. He got restless and fidgety, and had terrible fits of temper. At last I wrote to the mission and asked Mrs. Smith (that was not her real name) to invite me and Dirty Jim to tea. The invitations arrived in due course.

Jim burst into my tent while I was having a bath.

“ I say, here is that mission female asking ME to

tea. Wants to get rid of her tracts, I suppose, or maybe she wants to convert me. Convert ME ! Well, I won't go.”

“ But you must go, Jim, you cannot be so rude to a lady. I have been asked too ! ”

“ Have you ? As a chaperone, I suppose. Well, if you go, I might come as well. But you warn her, I won't stand any mission nonsense ! ”

On our way to the mission Dirty Jim never tired of telling me how he would put the woman into her place if she tried any of her tricks on him. He would tell her his mind, he would ! And if she insisted, he would kick the table over and go. No fear. Treat him like a little boy ! He wouldn't stand it. Not from his own mother ! Why, damn it, he hadn't cut himself loose from society to be preached at by that freckled, pock-marked, sheep-faced old thing. If she left him in peace he would behave ; if not, by Jove, he would teach her ! He went on storming like that till we reached the mission, and then . . .

Mrs. Smith was a pleasant-looking elderly woman, and she did her best to make him feel at home ; but there was poor Jim, sitting on the edge of a chair, as uneasy as a schoolboy in the “ head's ” study, and she could not get a word, a single word, out of him. He scarcely touched his tea ; when, however, a dish of golden-brown dough-nuts was set on the table he gave a grunt of pleasure and, shamming absent-mindedness, devoured a dozen or so. God alone knows what memories of childhood were revived by those dough-nuts. Then he relapsed into passivity. When we left he hitched the bag he always carried on to his shoulder and without a word of thanks ran off.

We walked silently for some time, then I made an attempt at conversation, but was so rudely rebuffed that I gave it up. After a time Jim shifted the bag from one shoulder to the other and, struck by its weight, opened it and looked inside. The blood rushed to his face and tinged it like copper. He gasped, put his hand to his heart and, gasping for breath he stuttered, “She has filled my bag with dough-nuts, because she saw I liked them !” And then he collapsed, hid his face in his hands and wept like a child.

No, Jim did not reform after that. But perhaps he had not time to do so, because six months later he was killed by a native whom he had bullied past endurance.

There was another queer character about ; I have no doubt he had a name, but he was generally spoken of as “the Greek.” He had erected his store on the undelimited frontier between British and Belgian territory ; this was a very convenient situation, because whenever anyone wanted to interfere with him he could claim to be in the country where the unwelcome visitor had no authority. At last the Belgian and the English tax-collectors made up their minds to defeat him : they went together to ask him to pay their king’s dues. At first “the Greek” was taken aback, but only for a moment. Then he quietly opened his safe and said :

“Gentlemen, here is the money. Of course, you will understand that I can only pay one of you ; who is it to be ? You must decide between yourselves, and I will accept your decision.”

Naturally neither of the two tax-collectors could

abandon his claim and take it upon himself to admit the other's right to territory, which might be on his side of the frontier. “ The Greek ” smiled and waited ; at last he said, “ Gentlemen, I will keep my money till you settle the question ; meanwhile, will you have a drink ? ”

CHAPTER III

THE BALUBA—STORY OF THE PYTHON

I SETTLED on the right bank of the River Lualaba where it leaves Lake Moero opposite Mount Kasengeneke, a rock which was once the stronghold of a mighty Luba chief who, to render it impregnable to his foes, attempted to cut off from the mainland the peninsula on which it stands; he died before his end was achieved, but to this day there remain traces of his canal, surely an ambitious enterprise for a race with a reputation for indolence.

It is a serious crime to call this river Lualaba. Livingstone, who discovered it, called it so, and during the three and half years I lived on its shores I never heard it called otherwise by a native; neither has Father Colle, who spent twenty years on its banks. Still, on the most recent map it figures as Luvua. The mistake arose obviously from the fact that there is a short branch of the river of that name near its confluence with the Kamolondo, and a traveller mistook the name of the part for that of the whole, and the name of the main river for that of the affluent. The Lualaba became Luvua, and the Kamolondo Lualaba. Descending the Kamolondo my paddlers sang a boat song to the words "Lualaba bali!" The Lualaba is far away—what impudence, when they

could have seen on any map that they were travelling down that very river ! The writer of this book and others have pointed out this error, but the great and good men who order these things decided that as they had accepted the mistake, it ceased to be one—the doctrine of infallibility carried into geography. It must be borne in mind that nobody contests the right of discoverers to name lakes and mountains, rivers and dales after themselves or after one whom they desire to honour, but this right cannot be extended to stay-at-home map-makers. The discoverer of the Lualaba was Livingstone, and he called it, as the natives did, by that name, and as long as I live I shall call it as did the first white man who set eyes on it, and as do the black men who drink its waters.

From this my home I struck out in all directions. Whether I followed the river to the north through the land of Uruwa, or travelled amongst the Wabemba east towards the southern end of Lake Tanganyika, in a country which resembled, with its rich short grass and its fine trees growing far apart as if planted by Lenôtre, an endless park ; whether I followed marshy plateaux on the Kundelungu eastwards amongst the Batempa, or proceeded south to the swamps of Lake Banguelo through the country of the Bakundu, I met everywhere natives of the same light-skinned type (so light that my servant from the Lower Congo was always referred to as “ the black man ”), the same slender men, the same pretty women, speaking the same melodious language, Chiluba. They told me that the home of their people’s common ancestor had been far, far away, beyond Tanganyika, on the shores of a great, great water (Lake Nyassa), and that

some of their kindred still lived there. And on my way home, in the forests of elais palms on the Lomami river, I found Basonge, on the banks of the Sankuru Basamba and Bakwakalosh, and, on a later journey, Bena Lulua and Bashilange along the banks of the Kasai—and still these peoples were talking the sweet Luba tongue. Beyond them, the Lunda people are under a Luba ruling caste, and finally I found that the Bushongo people were also a branch of the great family, though they had been subdued by an aristocracy coming from far-away Lake Tshad. Like the Chosen People, the Baluba had been scattered all over the land. Besides, the country inhabited by Baluba has been for centuries the happy hunting-ground of the slave-raiders; consequently Luba slaves are found in every corner of the Congo, and their descendants must be innumerable in America. The characteristics of the average Muluba are these. He is a keen agriculturist, he is the most musical of all the negroes, and he is a wonderful story-teller. The last two qualities have certainly been transmitted unto their descendants across the seas. I should not wonder if Uncle Remus had Luba blood in his veins; fabulists of his type are found in every village. They not only tell you the traditional stories, but can improvise on the spur of the moment a tale, which will explain anything to the smallest detail. They have a story ready to explain any occurrence, and the experienced bard will never miss the opportunity of doing so. Why? He receives no reward; it is just what Gœthe called "*die Lust zum Fabuliren*"—(the joy of spinning a yarn). One day we, I and a few carriers, found at the outskirts of a village a dead python and on it, clutching

it near the head, a dead baboon, badly battered. The men picked them up; they would be a welcome addition to their dinner. Their lucky trove was naturally the talk of the village, where we spent the night and whose inhabitants shared with them the delicacy. When darkness fell and the men were lying round the fires (stories must not be told in the daytime, it is a thing never done), an old man told them, not to me, who was an unobserved listener, the following story.

There was great consternation in the forest. Well there might be; a great python had lately taken up its quarters in a hollow tree, and to satisfy its enormous appetite it wrought great havoc among the animals. Nothing was too small and nothing was too big for its taste: it would swallow a mouse and devour an antelope. There was not a family that had not lost one of its members, and at last the animals decided to hold a great assembly and to consider how they could rid the country of the monster. All old feuds were forgotten in face of the great, common danger; the jackal and the little antelope, the mongoose and the cobra, the hyena and the mandrill, the hawk and the rat, all sat peacefully side by side and tried to find some means of saving the community. The first to speak was the jackal.

“Brethren,” he said, “this is not the time for wasting words. We don’t want fine speeches, we want action. If we delay any longer there won’t be an animal left in the forest. We must use all our courage and our cunning to rid the place of the python, or the python will rid the place of us. Something has to be done, and it has to be done quickly. I call on the

assembly to decide unanimously that the python must be killed ! ”

The animals all approved and shouted frantically :
“ Death to the python ! ”

“ Well spoken,” said the leopard, “ and now let us hear Uncle Jackal, who will tell us how we shall kill the python.”

The jackal scratched himself behind his ear. “ I have done my share,” he said, “ I have advised you to destroy the python ; now let some one else tell us how to do it.”

There was general silence. Then the jackal continued, “ There is one among us who has more tricks up his sleeve than anyone else : that is Uncle Antelope. He will tell us how to kill the python.”

All the animals cheered. The little antelope looked angrily at the jackal and then he said :

“ I am very much flattered by what Uncle Jackal said ; I have an idea, but the question is, Will you, all of you, approve and do your share ? ”

The animals cheered frantically and shouted, “ We will ! ”

“ Good,” said the little antelope. “ This is my plan. We must take a good strong vine, or a nice flexible cane, and tie it firmly round the waist of one of us. This animal must then go near the python and let himself be caught. The python will swallow him. You know that this monster’s teeth are turned all inward, and that when he begins to swallow something he cannot spit it out again, he must go on swallowing the whole thing. When the python has swallowed the animal we all must catch hold of the vine which has been tied round its waist and drag the python by it to the river and drown it.”

"Hurrah!" shouted the animals. Then one of them asked, "And pray, Uncle Antelope, who is to sacrifice himself for the good of the community?"

"I suggest," the little antelope said with a malicious smile, "that it be Uncle Jackal."

All the animals cheered, except the jackal. He said that he was much honoured by the choice of his friends, but he, unfortunately, had some very important business to do within the next few weeks and would have to decline. He was very sorry, but he could not neglect his affairs . . .

"I am disappointed in Uncle Jackal," the hyena said. "I thought better of him. But as he won't help us, I will suggest another plan. I don't approve of killing your enemy by sly, underhand tricks. An open, straight fight for me. If die we must, let us die like heroes. I suggest an open, bold attack on the python, and propose that Uncle Leopard be sent to fight and destroy our enemy. If he wants any advice how to do it, I shall give it him with pleasure."

The leopard seemed not in the least pleased. He snarled at the hyena, and would have gone for him, tooth and nail, had not the other animals asked him to refrain for the sake of the common good.

"That is all very well," the leopard growled, "but it would make any man angry to see the biggest coward among us advise a bold fight—and then send some one else to do the fighting. I am ready to fight you, Uncle Hyena, any time . . ."

"No fighting at a palaver!" all the other animals shouted, and at last peace was restored.

Then all of a sudden an old she-baboon stepped

forward. Her eyes sparkled and her tremendous teeth shone white in her powerful jaws.

"I'll kill the python," she said simply. "The python has devoured my baby. I'll kill her for that!"

What a cheer rose from the crowd! All the animals came up to the baboon, patted her on her back, and told her how brave she was.

"That is the right spirit!" shouted the hyena.

"Don't be afraid," the jackal encouraged the baboon, "and think of your poor innocent baby!"

"How noble!" said the guinea-fowl, but hid quickly behind the leopard as the baboon grinned fiercely.

All the animals accompanied the baboon on her way to the great fight, but as she approached the lair of the python, one after the other fell away till at last there was none left but the leopard. But when they sighted the python he, too, stopped and hid carefully behind a tree to see what was going to happen.

The baboon climbed a tree and hiding carefully between the boughs she watched the python from above. For a long time the snake remained immobile, curled round a tree, till at last it raised its head and began slowly to unwind. Its upper part was stretching out, its head swaying to and fro, when all of a sudden the baboon jumped on it from the tree. With two hands she clutched its throat, with the other two she held on lower down; she dug her teeth fiercely into the python's head. In agony the huge reptile wriggled about, while the baboon tore away at its head. The snake, to rid itself of its enemy, tried to smash the

baboon by knocking her furiously against the tree ; soon the aggressor was covered with blood, one of her hands fell : her arm was broken. But with the others she held on and she continued to bite the snake's head. The blows against the tree fell faster and faster ; the baboon's head was struck against a branch and one of her eyes was hanging from its socket. But the baboon thought of her dead baby, and as she felt the strength of her hands fail, with a supreme effort of her jaws she crushed the head of the python. Slowly the huge snake's hold round the trunk relaxed ; its movements slowed down and it fell down dead. The victor lay at its side, her fangs still buried in the snake's head, but when the leopard came up to compliment her on her victory he found her a mangled corpse.

There was great rejoicing amongst the animals : they all came to see their dead foe. But none thought of giving the victor a decent burial, and, as they were walking home, the hyena whispered to the jackal :

"What a fool Auntie Baboon was to get herself killed like that . . ."

"Yes," said the jackal, and they walked on in silence for a while. Then the jackal nudged the hyena and said :

"Uncle Hyena."

"Yes ?"

"When it is dark . . ." the jackal whispered.

"Hm !" grinned the hyena, and licked his chops.

This story, being an improvisation, is unlike those of Uncle Remus, but, when it comes to the traditional ones, we not only find a resemblance, but we find the same heroes and the same plot. Many years ago I

showed some stories I had collected to my friend, Thomas Heath Joyce, who was then editor of the *Graphic*. He told me that he liked them, but that I had copied Uncle Remus too closely. Well, at that time I had never heard of Uncle Remus; and it was this remark that made me first read him.

Luba songs are very pleasant to our ears, and the execution of their orchestras is splendid; no chief would be without one. The "leader" plays the *marimba*, a xylophone consisting of a board of keys made of hard wood and tuned in the pentatonic scale; under each key a calabash is attached which acts as a resonator. The "leader" plays the melody with some ornamentations common to instruments played with hammers. Next in importance to him are the flautists; there must be at least five, but generally there are many more. Each note of the scale is represented by one or more flutes, and each flute can play but one note; the success of the performance depends on each musician playing his instrument at the right moment. We have here an organ every pipe of which is sounded by a different organist. The *ensemble* is generally perfect. The rhythm is accented by drums, gongs and rattles.

The flutes used in the orchestra are of the pan-pipe order and the players blow into the end of the reed; soloists use flutes which are played sideways. The artist generally plays for himself; there may be people listening or there may not; that leaves him entirely indifferent. On the other hand, I do not remember hearing a person singing alone; generally there is a crowd. One makes up the recitative and the rest form the chorus.

CHAPTER IV

THE BALUBA—COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

IT is a recognised fact that most of us take a pleasurable interest in other people's love affairs; it is even said that certain writers of fiction make quite a good income from the description with minute details of the joys and sorrows of courtship; if in the last chapter the heroine marries the right man, this is comedy; if the wrong one, it is drama, and we can expect a sequel in a second volume. This is as it should be: it is right that love should interest us, for without it the living world would come to an end.

It has been many times argued that younger races than ours are incapable of feeling love so nobly as we do, and the fact that in many Bantu languages the word for "to love" is identical with "to desire" has been quoted time after time as a proof of the theory. This is, however, not the case amongst the Baluba; the verb expressing the idea of being in love is identical with being in pain, *kusanswa*. They recognise that:

"The throbbing heart is made to ache,
To suffer pangs of love—and break."

(Hungarian Folk-song).

Still, when a Muluba girl reaches the age of puberty there is great rejoicing in her family and in the

village, and the child (for she is rarely over ten years of age) dreams only of happiness. Till then she has been living in "the girls' house" with others of her age; now a special small hut is erected for her behind her mother's; this she may share with a friend or not. Sometimes it is during a visit to another village, or at a dance, or at a market, that she and he whom destiny has chosen for her mate, meet and fall in love with each other; it may happen that her uncle and her parents take matters into their own hands and cast their eyes on some eligible youth; at any rate, one fine day HE arrives, and after having been asked to a meal by her parents expresses his wish to marry their daughter. The first thing done is to inquire carefully into his clan, his ancestry and family, so as to make quite sure that no divine laws stand in the way of the union. This question settled, the bride-to-be has to be asked for her consent, and it is considered good manners that the young lady should be timid and shyly turn her back on her adorer—even though she may have instigated him to take this step, and have encouraged him to it with more than word of mouth. Nor is it correct to accept a proposal at once; maidenly reluctance must be shown, though she be desperately in love with the suitor; but there are ways of refusing which leave nobody in doubt about their conventional character. On the other hand, the young lady may say a decided "no," and then there is no power that can coerce her to alter her mind. It is every girl's ambition to be a first wife, because she will occupy in her husband's household a prominent position from which nobody can displace her; in this the peasant girl has a better



BALUBA ON THE SHORES OF LAKE MOERO.

They were originally a powerful tribe, but owing to pressure from the East by neighbouring pastoral tribes retired and spread all over South-eastern Congoland.

chance than the daughter of a chief or of an elder, for, while ordinary mortals are, as a rule, contented with one wife, the nobility will aim at a harem in proportion to the husband's importance. Still, the "upper classes" like to marry their daughters to people of their own social standing, all the more so as the dowry paid by the prospective husband is in proportion to his position in the community. There is no fixed sum—half the charm of courting would be removed if there were. The Baluba are a polite people, but business is business, and besides there is in them that ambition, inseparable from all commercial transactions amongst the Bantu, to drive a hard bargain, or, better still, somehow to do the other fellow in. It is not greed that inspires them, but just the love of sport, as every business is considered a mental tournament in which each party pits his intelligence and cunning against that of the other.

The young man, when making his proposal, has certainly mentioned that it would be an honour to be connected with such a distinguished family as that to which his intended belongs, and that nothing could be more desirable to his clan than to cement an old friendship with hers by such an union. The same young man discussing the dowry takes quite a different view; he forgets about the uncle who is a chief, but insists on the cousin whom his own village has sold into slavery for being a rogue and vagabond. As for her clan! Was there ever a clan that had more and worse quarrels on hand, or contained a more disreputable lot of good-for-nothings amongst its members? It wanted real courage to have anything to do with it. . . . Nor does the other side mince

matters ; but nobody really minds, because they all know it is pure bluff and no harm is meant.

The business part settled, the young man hands to the bride half of the agreed dowry ; except for the strings of beads which will adorn her on her wedding-day, she passes all the goods on to her uncle, who is the head of the family. The rest is paid by instalments, and not until the whole amount is handed over does the wedding take place.

I had asked a friendly chief to let me know whenever there was a wedding celebrated in his village so that I might attend ; he came one day and told me that a marriage would take place in a village not very far from his. The bridegroom was one of his subjects, so if I spent the night with him I could see everything by going with the villagers to the feast.

The village was situated on a slight eminence a few hundred yards from the river ; as I walked down the principal street (there were several others, parallel with it) the chief explained to me that the first huts at the outskirts were those of the young warriors, so that they might always be at hand in case of attack ; he showed me a youth, a smart young fellow with mischief sparkling in his eyes, and told me that he was the captain of the young men ; not a bad fellow, but always up to pranks and the most impudent liar in the village. The youth beamed with pride on being so complimented in the presence of a distinguished stranger. The huts that we now saw were square with a beehive roof reaching to the ground, some with a canopy over the entrance, belonged to the ordinary folk ; then we came to small enclosures which were in the quarter of the nobility. Near the

chief's enclosure there were three others, belonging, one to the chief counsellor: adviser and, in case of necessity, lieutenant of the chief; another to the second counsellor, who collected tribute for him, and the last to the counsellor third in rank, who was the spokesman of the common people in their dealings with the chief.

Except for small boys every one wore some clothes, though those of the younger girls were more ornamental than useful to serve modesty. Most of the grown-ups wore short skirts of imported cloth, but a few elders still used the bark cloth of old. The elders had, according to their importance, more or less of the protuberant part of their back bare; the chief was a most important person, it was impossible to imagine a more important one. Many of the young men wore ornamental designs in red, white and black on their bodies, and the chief told me these were clan marks; I noticed that they repeated themselves and were obviously conventional. The forehead of the men and women was shaven from ear to ear, the remaining hair was twisted in innumerable strands hanging down the back of the head. Every one had a long pin stuck in the hair, meant as well for the chase as for ornament; besides this some wore small carvings, pretty leaves, and brightly coloured feathers, plaited into it so as to add further beauty to their hair soaked in oil and dyed black with soot. The bridegroom had his head covered with a skin, and, when he removed it at my request, I saw that he had made ready for the ceremony by dyeing his ringlets red and by sticking two long feathers of the pennant-winged nightjar above his ears.

We entered the enclosure of the chief where his

principal spouse received me ; she was covered with ornaments of beads, copper, etc. ; on the back of her head she had a cane frame which served as the basis of a most elaborate bead-ornament. The chief led me to a hut and told me that as his guest the whole of his enclosure was at my disposal ; he paid homage to my ignorance and innocence by going into details which I will spare my readers.

Early next morning there was much beating of drums and gongs ; the young men of the village were preparing to accompany their comrade to "steal the bride" ; I decided to go with them. We proceeded in Indian file, the boys making an infernal noise ; there was no pretence of secrecy. Near the fiancée's village they formed up in a compact mass and with wild war whoops rushed towards the hut of the maiden's parents. The girl stood at the door. The front part of her head was plastered with some black stuff striped with bright red, her body glossy with oil. Her ceremonial skirt, brown with a broad scarlet line in the middle, was fringed ; she was covered with ornaments, the most prominent being two heavy rows of blue beads crossing in front of her breast. She waited silently till we were quite near, then, shrieking as if in great distress, she rushed into the hut. Her mother followed, and for a short time we heard her earnest pleadings with her child. Finally, she came back, pushing the girl in front of her. The bridegroom rushed at the bride, but the mother protected her child with her own body and only stood aside after receiving a present of a few beads ; then the man caught the girl by her shoulders and dragged her away. The villagers pretended to defend her, but

the bridegroom's companions hustled them aside, all with a deafening noise. A woman stepped forward, and taking the girl astride on her shoulders started to carry her towards her new home. Her family followed laden with big baskets containing the bride's possessions and provisions for the wedding-feast. The bridegroom ran in front, displaying great energy; he and the whole procession were held up at the village entrance by an apparently hostile crowd. This necessitated a distribution of beads. On we went; half-way between the two villages we found an ambuscade of the bride's friends, but generosity overcame their opposition. When we came near our destination the bridegroom suddenly began to run, and on our arrival we found him hidden in his new hut, the door being barred by his mother. The bride descended from her mount and approached the old lady, who received her with vile abuse—ceremonial abuse, quite conventional; the real thing comes later. Her ire was appeased by a present. Then the bride and her friends went in search of the happy man who was hiding in the remotest corner of the hut; neither threats nor the supplications of the bride could induce him to come forth—till the gentle persuasion of money was tried, and he appeared under the porch amidst general jubilation. All ended in a great banquet followed by drinking, and finally by a dance which lasted till dawn.

I was told that these ceremonies were considerably curtailed, when the bride was a slave, and really amounted to a simple purchase; but even in that case the consent of the woman could not be dispensed with. This is all the more remarkable, as the Baluba of these parts

have been for some time influenced by Arab and Wanyamwesi invaders, and, worse still, by their ruffianly followers. It may be for this reason that on the whole they treat their slaves worse than the other natives of the Congo ; they house them badly and know how to get all the work they can out of them. People like to marry slave girls, because these cannot leave them at will as free women may ; and besides, they have no clan and no family to take their sides in case of conjugal trouble. The slave woman who marries a free man becomes free herself, but the stigma of slavery remains on her and, though nobody would dare to call her a slave to her face or speak of her as such to her husband, yet she gets the cold shoulder from the free-born woman, and should her husband marry a free second wife the former slave has to abdicate her position as chief wife in her favour.

A free woman will not marry a slave, these have to be provided with a wife by their master. As the purchase of a wife for the slave is an expensive business most bondsmen would remain bachelors were it not that every master is responsible for the misdeeds of his slave, and should his enforced celibacy drive him to commit rape or adultery it would not only lead to his mutilation, i.e. the loss or depreciation of a valuable property to his master, but also to the pecuniary responsibility for the fine, a heavy one, that would be inflicted.

The married woman does not enter the clan of her husband ; she never loses the membership of her own clan, and her children will belong to it too. This is another reason why men will marry slave women ; as these belong to no clan their children (assuming

that the husband has bought his slave wife) will remain with him for the rest of his life, while the children of a free woman return on maturity to their mother's clan. To remain with them, some men go to live in their wife's village, though they can never become the members of her clan, which consists exclusively of the descendants in the female line of the founder.

On the whole married couples live happily together, and adultery is not so common as it would appear from those who live in the vicinity of the white man ; it is natural that the natives who leave their village to settle in the neighbourhood of Europeans, officials, traders or missionaries, are not the best elements and give a distorted picture of Luba morals. Adultery is generally punished by a conjugal thrashing, and only in case of repeated offences will the husband repudiate his wife ; he is then entitled to recover the dowry. The co-respondent is always obliged to pay heavy damages ; if he is a slave, or the offended husband a man of importance, he may be mutilated. The lot of women is not a bad one ; in the south, where patriarchal conditions prevail, it is she who sows and reaps ; in the east, where slaves are kept in greater number and more heavily worked, the wives of wealthy people do little more than look after their children and cook their husband's food. The widow is inherited like other property, but this is really only a matter of form : as soon as she has gone through the ritual purification by washing off the ashes with which she has covered her body on her husband's death she is free to return to her clan ; should she marry again, the dowry, or at any rate the greater part of it, belongs to the husband's heir. Some widows refuse to marry again, and go to

some town to lead a gay life ; this is especially the case if they have no children. If a woman dies without children, the dowry her husband has paid for her is forfeited ; if, however, she has borne a child the husband is entitled to its return or to another wife, who frequently is chosen from amongst the sisters of the deceased.

CHAPTER V

HUNTING WITH PYGMIES

SOME of the Congo natives are fine hunters indeed : e.g. the Batetela will tackle a leopard with wooden spears ; the Baluba in the south fight the lion with bows and arrows ; the Budja attack and kill elephants armed with spears only ; and the Badjok will do the same with guns, which cost five francs on the coast. But the greatest of all, as judged by the natives themselves, are the pygmies. These uncanny little men have slowly retired deeper and deeper into the forest, fleeing before the larger species ; two hundred years ago they were still known near the West Coast, now none can be found outside the great forest, which covers the equatorial region. They have never changed ; if a change is forced on them they flee or they die. They build no permanent villages, nor do they till the soil ; their only occupation is hunting, and their habitations follow the game. To obtain vegetable food or iron (required for their arrows, or knives or spear-heads) they use the most primitive form of barter known : an animal they have killed is deposited at night near the entrance of a village ; next night they come to fetch the price, which they expect to find in the same place where they have put their game. No villager would dare to take some of the meat

without paying its full value: for, unseen by him, he is watched by the little men, and should he defraud them he is sure to be found dead a few days later with a tiny poisoned arrow in his side. The pygmies are a serious people and will not allow any jokes that interfere with their rights. It must be said to their credit that no pygmy has ever been known to pilfer the plantations of the villagers, however hard pressed for food.

There are pygmies who have a permanent arrangement with some chief, according to which they keep him regularly supplied with meat and honey, while he provides them with flour, beans, salt and iron. The chief of such a group of pygmies will even come occasionally to the village and be on quite sociable terms with the natives.

It had always been my ambition to go out one day with some pygmies to shoot; I was burning to see them at work. Consequently when Songolenga boasted to me that he "owned" a band of pygmy hunters (he might as well have said that he owned the sun because he was warmed by its rays) and that their chief came occasionally to see him, I asked him to make arrangements for me to get an opportunity of seeing these little great hunters at work. He doubted whether they would consent, but when I promised him that I would reward him with a pair of old boots he had coveted for a long time should he prove successful, he said he would try. A few days later the pygmy came, but scorned the idea of having anything to do with the white man. The proposal had roused his anger, and he was leaving in a huff when he beheld some of my men preparing the skin of a rhinoceros.

He stopped, looked at the trophy, took his chin in his hand and appeared to be absorbed in deep thought. Then he turned to one of the men and asked him if I had killed the rhino. Being answered in the affirmative, he turned back and went to the chief.

"I will take the white man with me, whenever he likes," he said to that astonished dignitary.

"Why did you change your mind?" asked the chief.

"He is a hunter," the pygmy said. *Esprit de corps!*

What did I want to shoot? he asked me. Elephants? Well, he knew of no herd near enough, but he might find one in a day or two. He would let me know. Good-bye. A present? No thanks, he would accept one when he had found me some elephants.

A few days later, at about half-past ten in the morning, I found him and another pygmy standing suddenly in front of me. He nodded with his head towards the forest. Quickly I got my two rifles ready, pocketed the necessary ammunition while my boy wrapped up a piece of bread and a tin of sardines. All this scarcely took us more than five minutes, but the pygmy seemed to wonder why I had to waste all that time: he, when there was game signalled, would jump up, snatch up his bow and quiver, and would at once be ready for the fray.

When we had reached the end of the plantations, we went along a path which led straight to the forest. There we kept to the path for about half an hour, when my guide suddenly turned off to the left. We had now entered a pygmy path: there was no visible track and we seemed to be absolutely surrounded by the impenetrable undergrowth, except for a gap, now in front, now to the right or left, which enabled one

to see about a yard's distance. At the end of the gap a similar one appeared, and so on. Sometimes these openings were quite hidden by boughs or bushes, but these could always be pushed aside without difficulty ; on the whole the path was as good as any ordinary path except that it was invisible. My guide, however, proceeded quickly without the slightest hesitation, as if he were walking down a broad road. Now and then I looked back, but the path seemed to close up behind me so that I could never have found my way back by myself. It struck me that the pygmy's uncanny path was nothing more than the usual native thoroughfare, only more so. Every traveller has commented on the constant deviation from the straight line, which is its rule, and it has been many times attributed to the indolence of the negro. A tree having fallen across the path, it is natural that the traveller should walk round it ; he may not have the strength or the necessary tools to remove the obstacle. But if his way is barred by a bough, or a stone, or any other object that anyone might push away—still he will step aside to avoid it. The pygmy does the same, but he does it with a purpose and does it more thoroughly. He knows that the snapping of a twig or the brushing back of a bent bough is heard far in the silence of the forest and may cost him his quarry. That, of course, does not explain how he could remember the entanglements which beset his path. The thicket formed a screen of entwined shrubs and creepers, from which rose the majesty of millenary trees, mostly with trunks bare to a considerable height except for the vines that strangled them ; their roots grew sometimes several feet above the ground, now dangling like ropes, now

stretching out like phantom serpents of a nightmare, now forming solid walls like triangular planks reaching several feet from their base. Some of them were covered with a network of the wild fig, which, rising by their support, lived on their sap and ended by choking the life out of them, just as ungrateful men do to their benefactors. Others disappeared under a dense mass of grey moss, hanging like a grey beard nearly half a yard long from all their branches. The summits of the trees united in a dome, impenetrable to the rays of the sun. The gloom was never relieved by any flower, and the only perceptible sign of life went on mysteriously among insects under the thick carpet of dead leaves into which our feet sank ankle-deep. Every step raised the oppressive stench of decay.

After an hour or so we came to a place where the undergrowth had been cleared away, and there the village of the pygmies was established. There were about a dozen huts, if structures of such a temporary character deserve that name. Their construction was of the simplest : about a dozen flexible sticks had been stuck into the ground in a circle and their top-ends bent and tied together with vines ; this frame was then covered with leaves which did not seem to be otherwise attached. The hut had the appearance of a rather untidy beehive, and the opening that served as a door was so low that even the pygmies had to crawl in. Except for the men who were out tracking, the whole community had assembled to look at me ; I am of small stature, but I felt quite a giant now, as even the tallest man scarcely reached up to my shoulder. Yet there was nothing dwarf-like about these people, they were well-shaped, muscular, and their hands and feet

were in proportion to their body. Their hair was short and very frizzy ; as for the colour of their skin, it seemed very dark to me, though a want of cleanliness prevented closer examination. The babies were carried by their mothers on their hips, supported by a band of bark. Young and old, their clothing was very scanty. Only two men had spears, the others carried very short bows and a quiverful of small arrows ; on each quiver there was a little receptacle made of wood or bark which contained the poison into which the arrows are dipped before use.

The men exchanged a few words with the chief and we started off. For a time we were walking through dense undergrowth, but the chief who led always found some way to get through. After fording a brook or two we struck an elephant track ; this was not fresh, but as it led in the desired direction we followed it. Now and then a pygmy suddenly appeared, made some signs to the chief and was gone. After one of these appearances we changed our direction and again went through the thick undergrowth. About half an hour later we approached a clearing. At its edge the undergrowth became thinner and I, like a fool, paid less attention to following the chief closely. Suddenly I saw him about twenty yards in front of me. Without paying the slightest heed to the track he had made, I made straight for him. He stopped and said something I could not understand. But a minute later I knew : I had walked into that awful grass which the English call " wait-a-bit." It is about six feet high, its blades about a quarter of an inch wide with edges like delicate saws and as sharp as razors : they cut you wherever they touch and cover you with painful incisions. With hand

raised above my head, trying to get rapidly out of this, I must have upset the nest (rather like that of a wasp) of some tiny red ants, and the little pests covered me in an instant. Their bite stung like fire. I pulled off as many as I could, my gun-carrier helping me, while the pygmy stood by in silent reproach.

In a few minutes we came to a long open place, and at a distance we perceived the outlines of a few elephants who, strolling along at a leisurely pace headed for the nearest thicket. When we hit their spoor we found that there were about fifteen adults and two calves. We followed rapidly. Now and then we heard the breaking of branches and once I clearly distinguished a sound not unlike a neigh, but it was at a good distance. At last when I was beginning to lose breath, as my guide had constantly increased his speed and we were now running rather than walking, a pygmy appeared in front of us and the chief stopped me. We turned off the elephant's track and penetrated into the forest for about a hundred yards, then we made a slanting line towards the track in front of us. We now advanced cautiously, and finally, at a sign from the chief, we crept from cover to cover. Thus we came again to a small clearing, and, between the overhanging boughs and the low thicket I perceived the elephants at about fifty yards. First I took my camera and had a snapshot. The pygmy seemed to expect that the whole herd would drop when he heard the click; I suppose in his mind the camera and the rifle got somehow mixed up. I had not expected that at the distance we were from them the elephants could have heard the click of the shutter, but they displayed evident signs of alarm at once and the herd began to

stampede. I picked up my rifle and fired at the head of the biggest tusker I could see. I hit him, but certainly too far back. He jumped, raised a howl, then ran on as fast as he could. I fired a second shot, but again I was too far back. Another shriek and he turned round and charged. My gun-bearer handed me the Mannlicher rifle and I tried a shot between the elephant's eyes—and missed. Now he was nearly on us, so I jumped aside behind a huge tree and he passed me in blind fury. Another shot after him had no effect. By this time my gun-bearer had loaded my Express rifle again. I looked round for the chief. I could have strangled the fellow, he was sitting on a fallen tree and looking on! His bow and a couple of arrows lay in his lap, he was leaning slightly forward as if keenly interested in the performance. He got up slowly and beckoned me to follow him. He pointed in a direction practically at right angles where the wounded animal had run and said the single word—water! He meant, I have no doubt, that he expected the elephant would make for the water. He was right, too, for in less than a quarter of an hour we struck his track; he bled freely and froth showed that one shot must have touched his lungs. We must have been close in with him, because I am sure I heard him in the distance. On and on we went till I lost count of time. Meanwhile the increasing gloom told us that the sky had become heavily clouded, and we heard a heavy wind in the tops of the trees. And then suddenly my guide stopped and raised his open hands as if to say: "It is no good!" I looked round: we were on the borders of a swamp. It was useless trying to follow there. We had failed.

I nodded to the chief and we turned back. As we now took a short (?) cut towards the village we did not retrace our steps. The wind was howling above our heads and we heard the sound of distant thunder. We hurried on as fast as we could, considering that we were again going through the dense undergrowth on a track improvised by the pygmies. We got at last into a long open space and there we could increase our speed. The sky was black and flashes of lightning rent the air. All of a sudden it began to hail, hail lumps of ice as big as pigeon's eggs. I was protected as to my head: I had a sun-helmet, but what about my guide? Before I had time to look round he had cut a thick bunch of grass, tied it together and passed it over his head like a roof. It shielded him perfectly. Soon the ground was covered with hailstones, a wonderful sight a few degrees from the equator. After a few minutes the stones became smaller and finally they were replaced by rain—a lot of rain, but at any rate softer than hail. Of course, I was drenched to the skin. We went on. We reached the forest again. Again we followed a "pygmy's path," now and then going some little distance on the track of a herd of elephants. Night was falling fast. And still we were far from the village. The chief wanted me to go to his own, but I explained to him that I wanted to get to my tent, to dry clothes, into my bed if possible, and I made him somehow understand that we must make for Songolengas' village. So we continued our way, but as the light failed our progress became slower and slower. I had to put my hand on the pygmy's shoulder so as to be able to follow him; night had come, and I certainly could see him no longer. With my

feet I had to feel the ground every time before I put one down, though the chief warned me whenever an obstacle was in the way.

It was late in the evening when I reached the village. My teeth were chattering with cold. I undressed as fast as I could and found my body full of bruises from the hailstones. I slipped into bed, and there I stayed for thirty-six hours with the finest attack of malaria I ever had. That was all I brought back from my chase with the pygmies.

CHAPTER VI

INITIATION CEREMONIES—CANNIBALISM—SECRET SOCIETIES—A GORILLA

WHILST I was lying in the semi-conscious state into which one falls when a malarial attack has reached its height, I seemed to hear a rhythmical noise without being able to make up my mind, hard as I tried, if it was thunder, or drums, or simply the throbbing of my blood. Fever seems to sharpen one's senses to great sensitiveness, so that sounds and smells, otherwise scarcely perceptible, become quite unbearable; the sharp metallic click produced by bats, certainly not a specially penetrating sound, has given me on such occasions the most exquisite pain one can imagine. As the fever abated and my reasoning powers began to be restored I realised that the drums were beating furiously in the village, and whatever pain the noise caused me I regretted still more that my illness prevented me from assisting at the ceremony which was evidently going on that night. I was told the next day that some youths had been passing through the second initiation called *Kuluhuka*, "to emerge (from childhood)." The master of the ceremony, who had the title Nyengele, gave me an account of what had happened. The youths who had previously undergone circumcision and a preliminary initiation had been summoned by

him and assembled in the village at nightfall; there they had undergone the first part of their initiation: they had been tested for their courage by having a red-hot iron passed so close over their head that the hair was singed; anyone flinching was driven away with ignominy. Then some assistants of the Nyengele, in fantastic costumes of skins intended to make them look like wild animals, suddenly pounced upon the novices, but the boys had been brave and had stood their ground. Then the candidates were led, one after the other, into a circle formed by the elders, where the handle of a hoe had been fixed in the ground. Each boy was now made to hold this handle with both hands and turned in a bent position swiftly round and round for a time; then he was released and ordered to approach the Nyengele. None could get at him, and after one or two vain efforts all fell helplessly to the ground. I have tried this process of turning, and the effect is certainly uncanny: one sees the object one wants to approach, one tries to go towards it, but one's legs carry one off in quite a different direction; I have no doubt that if the turning is done for any length of time the victim must collapse at his first attempt to walk. This happened with the candidates; then the elders took hold of them and carried them off into the bush or wood where the initiation hut was hidden. I was not allowed to go and see this, but was told that in a few days the candidates would undergo another test, when they would have to go through some underground passage full of dangers; the final ceremony would take place some time later, when some wonderful feats would be performed by elders so as to frighten and

impress the boys. The Nyengele would not tell me more, but some younger and less discreet friends of mine who had undergone the initiation told me that they had seen men walking about with arrows stuck through their heads, that one had stabbed himself with a big knife without suffering any harm, and that another had had his abdomen pierced and had drawn a string through it, being none the worse for the operation. Of course, in Europe these simple conjuring tricks, a hoop with the two ends of an arrow fixed to it passed over the head under the hair, the knife whose blade sinks into the handle, and the string under the belt with its ends passing through one hole in front and one behind respectively, would not deceive the simplest yokel, but they cannot fail to make a deep impression on the less sophisticated Africans. Uninitiated people are derided as "uncircumcised ones."

I have seen the above ceremonies, or very similar ones, described as those of a secret society, as I have seen the legislating assembly of the Bangongo described as such. They are secret only so far as the white man is concerned, and form the inseparable part of every youth's admission to manhood. Girls are equally subject to circumcision and undergo initiation; but as the ceremonies are kept secret even from the men of their own tribe I could naturally obtain no information.

There are plenty of secret societies amongst the Baluba without giving that name to simple initiation. The most remarkable one is that of the *Bakazanzi*; like many others it has degenerated and has become in some localities a society of resurrectionist cannibals, but its origin was a very simple one—the fear of the

soul of the dead returning to take vengeance for wrongs suffered by the living. The idea that the soul remains in intimate contact with the body even after death is not confined to one part of the world (how many people in Europe would refuse to pass a cemetery at midnight?) and is widely spread in the Congo. It induces certain peoples, like the Basoko, to devour their dead relatives so that they may partake of the virtues and the strength of the dead; it forces the Bankutu to eat the corpse of every slave so that he may not haunt his master. This latter fear gave birth to the Bakazanzi, and I have never heard of any but a slave's or a wizard's grave being violated. The Baluba are not cannibals, but in every village there are a certain number of people who, sometimes simply out of a sense of duty, for the public good, dispose of the corpses of slaves and malefactors by eating them; no doubt some individuals acquire the taste for human flesh, but many eat it only in a ceremonial form and to avoid greater evils; the natural repulsion of the average Muluba to cannibalism is such that to prevent the disappearance of the Bakazanzi it is necessary to use pressure to get new recruits for the society. Souls act often so inconsiderately that one cannot wonder the Baluba rather feed on corpses than expose themselves to their misdeeds.

Some, probably the majority, behave as becomes good souls and are benevolent; others, though without malice, take a certain pleasure in teasing the living; sometimes their pranks are meant to be humorous, though their jokes are decidedly coarse and provoke more frequently the mirth of the lookers-on than of the victim. They will upset boiling pots,

pull off the garments of the most respectable old people, or, by their sudden appearance, frighten folk out of their wits. But there are others who are a regular bad lot, and come stealthily at night and seizing the hearts of sleepers squeeze them with all their might ; if the victim wakes in time, all is well and he may call it a nightmare, but if he does not, his life is pressed out of him and he is found dead in the morning. A person who has suffered from a nightmare will hurry to join the Bakazanzi. He will go to some friend who belongs to the brotherhood and ask him to act as his introducer ; as the recruiting of adepts is considered a meritorious act by the fraternity, and increases the prestige of the member, the trifling present he extracts from the candidate is no more than a formality. He will take the novice to a meeting of the society and present him as a candidate ; if he is approved, the dignitaries will give him a drug that renders him unconscious, and when he comes to himself he will find himself in a dark hut, his head ornamented with a diadem made of human phalanges. His body will be anointed with grease collected from a putrifying corpse, and he will be made to taste human flesh. His introducer will first touch his tongue with a piece of pudding which has been dipped into the stew, then he will be made to eat some of this in tiny bits, and finally he will swallow a piece of flesh. After this he will have to attend several meetings, and on each occasion he will have to partake of smoked human flesh. When he has been sufficiently hardened to the practice by eating the preserved flesh used on all these occasions, he will be given the opportunity of becoming a full member by

assisting at the consumption of a fresh corpse. This may be that of a person poisoned as a witch, or of any slave who happens to have died a natural death. The body is disinterred and divided amongst the assistants; whilst it is boiled the pot is tied with a rope to a stick fixed in the ground "to prevent the soul from escaping"; the skull is broken and pieces of it are used as talismans. He is also given the dried body of a scarab, the goliath beetle, which contains the magic ingredients preserving the Bakazanzi from all maleficent influences. These proceedings are varied in different localities, according to the fancy of the leading men, who complicate them as much as possible.

Besides the Bakazanzi, there are other secret societies; the members of one of them practise communism of property amongst themselves; poor people will make great efforts to join this, while the rich are forced to do so by threats. There is a society of the cock-and-hen type, where the duties of the sexes are reversed; the men fetch water, cook and wait on the women, etc.

These secret societies have no religious character whatever, none the less they are strongly condemned by those few who still adhere strictly to the ancient creed: the worship of ancestors. God, the creator, is the supreme spirit of the Baluba, as indicated by his name, N'File Mukulu, or Vilye Mukulu (in the eastern part the name Leza is found); but it is to the relics of the deceased ancestors that homage is paid and that supplications are addressed. The ancestor who is thus worshipped is the founder of the clan, and his chief priest is the present head of it.

The relics consist of the nails and some other parts of the body, and are carefully preserved for many generations in a shrine, the guardianship of which is the principal duty of the head of the clan (Mulohwe), who may or may not be a secular chief (Kilo). Some clans possess what is called a Mukisi Muhasi, an ancestral charm, which is said to be an image carved in wood or ivory representing the features of the ancestor ; all my efforts to be shown one of these failed—at any rate amongst the real Baluba ; as will be seen later I had better success with another people of Luba origin when experience had sharpened my wits. These images are memorial statues and quite distinct from the fetishes, Mikisi Mihake, which are magical charms or amulets. The latter serve to shield their possessor from evil or to inflict harm on his enemies ; they are endowed with their power by the professional magicians. However, both secret societies and fetishes are of relatively recent origin, and have been introduced since the forced dispersal of the Baluba, for whereas ancestor worship is found amongst all the people, who are the offspring of this tribe, some have to this day no fetishes and others have introduced them quite recently ; and the secret societies found amongst them are entirely different, and coincide, in my belief, with the introduction of the slave trade.

If I had been a wise man I should have spent my time in studying this very interesting people ; instead of that I was satisfied with picking up such information as was volunteered by some friendly native, or asked for when some object or custom struck me as peculiar. Young and overflowing with animal energy.

I wasted my time in roaming about the country, at first specially bent on killing game, and later in observing it. To stalk a herd of mountain zebras and see the beautiful, unsuspecting animals play about, or surprise the gambols of three or four different kinds of antelopes on marshy ground, is one of those pleasures that are cheaply bought by several hours' effort. And now and then the bloodless hunter may have a stroke of fortune which will reconcile him to a hundred failures.

I learned later that about that time I was reported to have died. A similar thing happened to me a few years later when I was with Captain Hilton Simpson ; the first news of my sad fate reached a friend in the British Museum on a post card thus : " Dear So-and-so. I am just back from the Congo. I suppose you have heard that Torday and his companion have been killed and eaten by the Bashilele ? I hope you are quite well."

I must not do this sort of thing again ; the next time it might be true.

Meanwhile I spent several happy months alone with my native followers in the African bush. Cut off from all communication with the world by a region in ferment, I quickly got accustomed to do without the company of people of my own colour, without newspapers, without letters. I lived on the fat of the land. I never lacked food, though it was not exactly of the kind I had been accustomed to since childhood, and I was busy arranging my life without the thought of a change. I built a village, made furniture, established vegetable gardens for me and my men, and erected a little fort in case of attack,

which, as it happened, never came off. I had plenty of ammunition and my rifle kept the camp in meat. For this purpose I used to go out early in the morning with a couple of men, and when I had slain my quarry one of these would go back to camp to fetch people to carry the meat home, while the other would watch over the bag, and protect it against hyenas and jackals. Being a gentleman of leisure to whom time did not matter, I would then stroll home alone by a circuitous route, stopping now and then to study some interesting animal, or plant, or again to dream.

On one of these delightful walks I came across the track of a herd of elephants. The spoor was fresh, so I decided to follow them up in the hope of bagging some ivory. I had walked about a couple of hours without getting into sight of the herd when I came to the edge of a swamp, which made any further progress impossible. I had no doubt that the elephants were seeking rest and coolness somewhere near, so I sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree and waited. I was in the midst of a dense forest; my steps as I walked over dead leaves and twigs had scared away all animals, so, there being nothing to look at, I indulged in day-dreams.

I had been sitting there for some time when somehow I became conscious that I was observed by something or somebody. There is no physiological explanation for it, but it is a fact that we do feel when eyes are resting on us. I expected consequently to see some animal emerge near by, and as one never knows what a visitor of this kind may be in Central Africa, I quietly moved my rifle into a position ready for immediate use. Then slowly, very slowly, I turned

my head in the direction whence the magic influence of eyes came. I saw nothing, but I knew that the natural curiosity of all living creatures would soon produce the intruder. Nothing moved for a time, then all of a sudden a branch cracked. Still nothing appeared, and my eyes were incapable of penetrating the dense foliage. Again the branches rustled, and I perceived two eyes gazing intently at me. It was quite impossible to make out what the creature was to whom they belonged ; certainly something big, for the eyes were high above the ground. Not an elephant, that I was sure of. Nor any of the cat-tribe. I was not quite certain it might not be a man. But that could not be. If a friend, he would have shown himself ; if a foe, he would have finished me off before I got a chance to use my rifle. No, it could not be a man. Yet there was something human about it. A monkey? Probably, though the eyes seemed rather large for that. Well, if it is not in a hurry to show itself, I have plenty of time to wait. I could not suspect the visitor of bad intentions, he seemed too timid for that. There, another movement forward. I knew he would do it. It seemed some big animal, dark and clumsy. Then, with a sudden movement, it stepped forward from among the branches. It was a huge creature. It stood on its hind legs, with one foreleg on the ground, the other lifted high up, clinging with it to a branch. Though its image was quite familiar to me, yet it took me some hard thinking before I could recognise it. It was an ape, a gorilla. That sent a thrill through me. Not only had I never seen one before, but monkeys and apes always made me feel uncanny : they are so very like myself, and

yet so very different. I suppose the gorilla felt something very like my own emotions. He opened his lips, disclosing his terrific teeth. Then he *pouted* and stepped a little forward. There he stood, motionless, for several minutes. He came a step nearer, then jumped back a yard or so. Again he grinned and his features began to work nervously. He shook a branch violently. I did not move. Now he gave a grunt, not unlike an old gentleman clearing his throat. He stepped boldly forward and finally rose on his two hind legs. He may have been about thirty yards from me, perhaps more. Down he came again on his right hand and hopped, three-legged, a yard or so nearer. With his spare hand he scratched his side. Again he hopped nearer. My hand clasped the rifle tightly, I began to think he was rather crowding me; yet curiosity prevented me from making any movement. The gorilla now picked something up from the ground and crammed it into his mouth. He spat it out with contempt. Again he cleared his throat. Suddenly he sat down, just as if he were going to say: "Come and have a talk!" I could not help smiling, and the slight alteration of my face made him retreat about a couple of yards; he now stood on his hind legs alone, with his arms, his huge arms, bent forward like a wrestler ready to come to grips. He smiled again, not a pleasant smile. He advanced, using his right arm to support himself. Then he stooped down, rose on both legs, stooped down again, rose, and so on, in ever faster succession. He was obviously getting excited. He stopped all of a sudden in the position of a sprinter ready for the start. His lips parted and his teeth chattered. He gave an awful wail. This

was a little too much for me. It was a gruesome sound, which seemed to be echoed by the whole forest. I jumped up and shouldered my rifle. With one tremendous bound the monster retreated and disappeared in the thicket.

I waited some time, but nothing moved. Slowly I started on my way home. I kept a sharp look out, but saw nothing revealing the proximity of the gorilla. I had walked some time, the trees were getting fewer, I was approaching the edge of the forest. All of a sudden I heard a succession of sounds, like the thumping of a big deep drum. It was my cousin, beating defiance on his tremendous chest

CHAPTER VII

THE BAKUBA—A VERY IMPORTANT MAN—GOVERNMENT
OFFICIALS—AN OFFICIAL HISTORIAN

THE years following my stay in the Katanga and the region of the Great Lakes were spent partly in the south-western Congo, partly amongst the forest dwellers and partly amongst the savannah people of the Central Congo. I was now engaged in investigating the various tribes and in collecting ethnographical specimens for the British Museum; even before I, with Captain Hilton Simpson and Mr. Norman H. Hardy, started on this expedition it had been decided that we should pay special attention to a people known as the Bakuba. They had been first heard of by a Portuguese ivory trader, Silva Porto, who did not succeed in visiting their country. The first white man to do so was Dr. Wolf, of the Wissmann expedition, who in 1884 met, at the fringe of the country, the King's son, who had assumed the supreme power in place of his decrepit, blind old father. The information he obtained about the country was mainly from the neighbouring tribes, who, again, had to rely more or less on hearsay, as the Bakuba would admit no strangers, and even Dr. Wolf's visit had to be expiated by the sacrifice of a certain number of slaves. Dr. Wolf mentioned that the tribe of the Bakuba to which the chief belonged

was called "Bena Bussongo"; probably he thought so, because the chief spoke of himself as Bushongo, while Wolf's foreign followers referred to the nation as Bakuba. Now, as we shall see, the whole country is called Bushongo, and its people Bashi-Bushongo, which has in time become shortened into Bushongo; Bakuba is the name given to them by their neighbours.

After Wolf's visit there was silence, but now and then some specimens of carving, embroidery or metal-work of exquisite taste reached the various museums of the world from Central Africa, and these became known as products of the Bakuba. Thus both for the collector and the ethnologist this country was a land of great promise. We thought it prudent to make our attack from its eastern frontier, the one which lies farthest from the capital; in consequence of the great distance which separated it from the centre of government it had adopted a less hostile attitude towards white folk and permitted the free access of traders. We meant to discover a means of ingratiating ourselves with the King, and did not intend approaching him till we had made sure how to do so in a way promising success.

As we came in sight of Misumba, about twenty miles south of the lower Sankuru, it seemed to me that I entered a new world. It was the most un-African place one could imagine. Stepping out of a lovely grove of palm trees we faced a long street, at least thirty feet wide, as straight as an arrow. It was bordered by oblong huts, each standing alone at an equal distance from its neighbours; they were all the same shape and differed only in their walls, which were made of matwork ornamented with beautiful



AN IMPORTANT LUBA CHIEF WITH HIS PRINCIPAL WIFE.

The lady's hair is dressed artistically on a wicker frame.

designs in black ; their conventional patterns, varied from house to house. The houses were as spick and span as if they had just been finished ; the road was swept clean. Though the day was still hot the village was as busy as a hive. Everybody was working, the looms of weavers were beating, the hammers of smiths clanging, under the sheds in the middle of the street men were carving, making mats or baskets, and in front of their houses women were engaged in embroidery. The very children were bent on some task, some working the smith's bellows, others combing the raffia for the weavers, or making themselves generally useful. The whole place was a picture of peaceful activity.

We were received by the chief and by the Viceroy who represented the King in this, the Bangongo, province. Isambula N'Genga was of royal blood and he made no secret of it. It is impossible to compare him to anyone. There is a noble marquis in England, of whom it has been said *ad nauseam* that he thought himself a very important person. I have had the honour of meeting him once ; he may have forgotten the memorable event, but I have not. I did not find him behaving differently from any ordinary gentleman, and if he is in the habit of crushing the common folk with his superiority he did no such thing during the two hours I could observe him. And if he had—why, after all, he had been Viceroy of India, was a distinguished traveller and man of letters, and had directed the foreign policy of the British Empire at a period when its voice had some weight in the councils of nations. He did these things, at any rate in the opinion of some people, well, but as for playing the

important person ! Go unto Isambula N'Genga and learn !

Isambula N'Genga did not look down on the common people any more than we look down on a fly crawling on the wall. The rabble did not exist for him, and everything that breathed the breath of life in his province was rabble. I am certain he did not see the people making their reverence to him ; I am quite certain that their voice never reached his ears. Twinkle, twinkle, little star—and that was Isambula N'Genga. He did shine like a diamond in the sky ; groomed, oiled, combed to perfection, he would walk down the street, slowly, his staff over his shoulders and his hands negligently slung over its ends. When he stopped he spread his legs and looked a perfect statue. When I asked him some question he would just wave his hand towards one of his courtiers—that was that fellow's department ! I am sure he meant to be very civil to me, but even the greatest courtesy has its limits. Were not those people there to know ? Why should he, Isambula N'Genga, trouble to think or to speak ? Was it not enough that he lived and adorned the world by his presence ?

As we were, after all, in the eyes of the natives, people of some importance, Isambula N'Genga was quite willing to allow us to bask in the sunshine of his presence, and it must have been a rude shock to him to find that we preferred the company of a very old man, a "Mukono" (country cousin) in the village. Our visits to the Viceroy became shorter and shorter, whilst we would spend hours on end with the Bilumbu, the old man in question. For with him I had "struck it rich." In those parts of Africa,

which European occupation has not yet stripped of its primitive charms, there are many treasures waiting for the traveller, whether his heart is longing for wealth, scientific discoveries or sporting achievements ; he is fortunate if he does not pass them by unnoticed. I have roamed heedlessly over goldfields. I have camped near the richest radium mine in the world, without knowing that wealth beyond the dreams of avarice was within my reach. I have searched for stone implements where people now dig for diamonds. I have met with the dwarf elephant before science knew of him and mistook him for a calf. But I have not missed the Bilumbu of Misumba—thanks to an attack of malaria from which the old man suffered, and for which he asked me for remedies. Without the Bilumbu I should never have succeeded amongst the Bushongo.

The Bilumbu (for this is a dignity, not a name) is amongst the Bangongo the elder whose duty it is to keep records of the country's past and to impart his knowledge to the young, so that they may not grow to manhood without knowing the glories of Bushongo history. It is true he is only a provincial historian, and, as I later found, his versions are not all orthodox, but what I learned from him enabled me to enquire intelligently into these matters whenever an opportunity arose. Though he was not fully acquainted with the government machine of the kingdom, he knew all about the administration of his province, and after we had struck up a friendship he freely discussed these matters with me.

There used to be a paramount chief of the tribe (now a province), whose place had been taken by the Viceroy delegated by the King. He was attended by

thirty-two councillors called *KOLOMO*, meaning elders. All elders wore little conical caps and carried a staff of office ; this latter was a more or less straight stick on which, while it had been still growing, a vine had made a deep spiral impression ; it was symbolical of the elders' power to shape the will of the chief. The first elder was the Prime Minister, who, assisted by two judges and the commander-in-chief, formed the executive. Next in rank came the two officials who corresponded to the chief and assistant commissioner of police—they watched over the observance of law and order. Then followed court dignitaries like the heralds, the master of the ceremonies and the administrator of royal revenues. Amongst the rest the Bilumbu and two women councillors must be mentioned. The internal affairs of the province were all decided by this council ; the imperial affairs were, however, in the hands of the Great Council in the capital, of which more anon.

A new elder having been elected, he was solemnly installed at an assembly ; he had been treating the other elders previously, " to pay for his entry." The *maludi*, a councillor, who among other duties had to remonstrate with the chief if he neglected or mismanaged public affairs (the King's remembrancer must have been something like this in the distant past), addressed him as follows :

" You have led till now a most detestable life, breaking the law on every possible occasion. The law saith, don't take your neighbour's goods, yet the goats and the fowls you have stolen are beyond counting. You could not pass a plantation without taking some of the crops, though you know well

enough that this is forbidden. The law saith that you must not covet your neighbour's wife ; but who can count the number of your adulteries ? The law enjoineeth you to give the chief his share of the game you killed ; how frequently have you been hiding in the bush to devour in secrecy that which was the chief's due ? The law forbiddeth quarrelling, and yet the whole day one hears your voice disputing. The law forbiddeth to kill, but you are still reeking with the blood of those you have slain ; the law ordereth you to pay your debts, yet how many of your fellow-villagers are pining in captivity as hostages for your dishonesty ?

“ Now that you are to take the *pangwe* (the elder's staff) you must change your life : no longer must you commit these crimes, nay, you must prevent others from committing them. Give good advice to the young, watch over the observance of the laws, and see to it that the chief governs for the country's weal ; should he lack in his duties, call out the young people and destroy him with all his chattels. You are now entitled to intervene if there is a quarrel between tribes. All people are descended from one couple and are brethren ; they must not shed each other's blood. Two people have given birth to us all and now we are a big nation ; would you like to see us reduced by fights and slaughter again to the number of two ? Take this staff, advise the young and punish the wicked.”

This speech reveals not only remarkably high ideals (though it seems to lack in courtesy and would be resented by our M.P.'s), but it also shows that the Bangongo have a Magna Carta which makes it a duty of the nation's leaders to resist a bad chief with arms.

It originates from the times when the chieftainship was hereditary, and had not yet been vested in a Viceroy delegated by the King.

This right to armed resistance was not a vain word ; during our stay in the country the Bangendi of the neighbouring province rose in arms against the central government itself. Other precedents exist. Near Lusambo, the administrative capital of the district, there is a tribe called Isambo, which in appearance, language and customs is identical with the Bangongo ; its members, however, do not recognise the authority of the King and have not done so since the middle of the seventeenth century.

The old Bilumbu was a great story-teller ; besides the legends which he had to relate as part of his official duty, he was always ready to explain anything by a yarn, some of them, undoubtedly, improvisations, others, as we could ascertain, part of the bag and baggage of every story-teller in the country. He knew we were fond of them and that we never forgot to show him our gratitude. I used to give him his presents, sometimes Simpson did, but Hardy, who could not understand a word of the native language, and was mostly engaged in painting somewhere else, naturally never thought of taking a gift to the old man. I must mention that Hardy was bald, and baldness being very rare amongst the natives, is considered a sign of great age. One day Hardy came to see me while I was confabulating with the old man, and when he wanted to leave the Bilumbu asked me to stop him and to tell him in his own language what he, the Bilumbu, wanted to say. It was this :

“Tell this old man that it is for the aged to set

a good example to the young, and not for the young to show the old what they ought to do. Yet when the children do their duty it ought to remind the aged to do theirs. Look at these two little ones (meaning Hilton Simpson and me !); they know the respect that is due to an old man like me, and day by day they bring me something to cheer my heart; whereas you, whose head has been polished by the multitude of years that have passed over it, what have you ever given me?"

Poor Hardy was very much taken aback by being lectured like this (I did not spare him a word!), especially as he was of an exceptionally generous disposition; so he rushed off to his tent and got the best pipe he possessed and presented it with solemn apologies to the Bilumbu. The old chap was delighted, and taking him by the hand made him sit down next to him. After having borrowed Simpson's pouch to fill his new acquisition, he took a whiff or two and then made the pipe pass round. Then he turned to Hardy and spoke (I translated):

"I don't say this for you, because not only have you shown great respect to me, but, after all, you are yourself one of those who walk on wood and bite with iron (very old, leaning on a staff and toothless), but we have always had great trouble in keeping the young people in their place till we invented the bull-roarer. It happened like this:

"Once there was a young man who was in the habit of fetching palm-wine every day; when he brought it to the village he went to his mother's hut and there they drank it, she and he, without leaving even a drop for the youth's poor thirsty father. One day the old man asked him why he showed him so little respect;

thereupon the youth answered rudely, and told the old man to mind his own business and let him attend to his as he liked.

“The father made up his mind to teach him better manners. He followed him to the wood and watched him gather his palm-wine; when the boy had all his calabashes duly filled his father, still hidden, attached a thin strip of wood to a string and began to turn it round and round above his head. The noise, which this produced terrified the young man to such an extent that he dropped his calabashes and fled for safety to the village. The same thing happened the following days. After a time the father asked his son: ‘What is the matter with you? you don’t eat, you don’t drink, are you ill?’ ‘No,’ said the son, ‘I am not ill, but every evening when I am bringing palm-wine for my mother and myself, an awful ghost waylays me and terrorises me with horrible howls.’ ‘What,’ answered the old man, ‘you, who can be impudent with your father are afraid of a ghost? Go with your mother and your palm-wine and be impudent to the ghost!’ The son asked for his father’s forgiveness and promised to mend his ways; from that day he never neglected giving him his due share of wine. At night, when the whole village was asleep, the father gathered the other old men around him and told them of his experience, and since that day the bull-roarer has been used at our initiation ceremonies to frighten the boys and teach them to respect their elders.”

After this, whenever we heard the bull-roarer, we teased Hardy and told him it was time for him to make another present to the Bilumbu.

CHAPTER VIII

BANGONGO AND LUBA STORIES

THERE is not much affinity between the Bangongo and the Baluba; this is only natural, as the latter live in the savannah country while the Bangongo are descendants of the Basongo Meno, a conglomeration of tribes living in the forest on the other bank of the Sankuru river. However, the organisation of the chief's council was obviously a development of the Luba model, and there were several other things that the two people had in common. In their arts it was striking that, whereas in carving the Bangongo surpassed the Baluba, only those near the river made pottery. As for their literature (I hope I may call folk-lore by that name), the forest people, obviously influenced by their gloomy surroundings, could never rise to that exuberant humour which characterises the people of the land of sunshine. I am not making the mistake of judging the Bangongo stories after those the old Bilumbu told us; his was a schoolmaster's mind and his duty was to tell the young people the history of their country, and to instruct them; as a solemn old gentleman, conscious of his dignity, he could not demean himself by being frivolous. But even those stories with which younger people amused themselves were to some extent serious; they never made

me laugh outright like the Luba ones. The smith of Misumba, cheerful as it becomes a smith to be since Longfellow laid down the rule, told the following story while at work :

The dog and the jackal, brothers, used to live together in the bush. One day they had been unlucky and, though they had worked very hard, they returned empty-handed from the chase ; and as night fell, they were hungry and shivering with cold. "Jackal !" called the dog. "What is it ?" said the jackal. "Man has a village near by," said the dog. "I know," said the jackal. "A fire is burning in his hut," said the dog. "Yes." "Fire is nice and warm." "Yes." "There may be a bone lying about near the fire." "Yes." "Why don't you go and fetch some fire and the bone ?"

(The narrator spoke in different voices for the two animals, and his "yes" was like the jackal's bark ; this gave cause for great merriment.)

"Not I," said the jackal. "He who gives advice ought to act on it. Fetch them yourself." "I am afraid," said the dog and laid himself down to sleep. But as it was getting colder and colder, the animals' teeth began to chatter, and the dog, having less fur than the jackal, felt the cold more keenly. At last he could bear it no longer and exclaimed : "I *will* go and fetch fire ; you stay, and, if I don't come back soon you come and call me." "Yes," said the jackal. Off went the dog to the village, but, as he was getting near it the fowls took alarm and made a great noise ; the man came out of his hut and seeing the dog took his spear to kill him. The dog pleaded : "Please don't kill me ! I am a poor beast dying of cold and

starvation ; let me warm myself near your fire and then I shall return to the bush." "Let it be so," said the man ; "warm yourself, but when you have done so, back you go to the bush !" Cringing, the dog entered the hut and lay down near the bright fire ; he picked up a bone the man had cast away and began to gnaw it. After a time the man asked : "Have you finished ?" "Not yet," said the dog and started on another bone. After a time the man asked again : "Have you finished ?" "Not yet," replied the dog and looked for another bone. The fire was delightful and the bone savoury. The dog felt happier than he had ever felt before, and the idea of going out into the cold night filled him with horror. So when the man asked for the third time : "Have you finished ?" he answered : "Yes, but I want you to keep me with you. I will be helpful ; instead of robbing your roost like brother jackal, I will help you to catch the fowl of the jungle ; I will reveal to you all the cunning ways of the wild animals. For my service I only ask you for a place near your hearth and the remains of your meal." "Thus be it," said the man, and since then the dog has lived in the village. As the night falls you will hear a plaintive howl near the village : "Bo-a, bo-a" (dog, dog !) and that is the jackal calling for his brother to come back.

Surely this is not a bad story ; it explains the domestication of the dog, it is moral by showing that good services are rewarded, and the lesson is not rubbed in excessively. Now, if we take a Luba one dealing with animals, we shall find that : (1) It explains nothing, (2) it is delightfully immoral, (3) that, while in the Bangongo story the animals act

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as animals, in the Luba one they are symbols of men and act absolutely like human beings. Luba stories are simply meant to amuse, and for some reason which it would be indelicate to explain it is always a knave who is the hero. The Bangongo story was called "The Dog and the Jackal"; the Luba one is "The Jackal and the Dwarf Antelope"; the latter is, of course, the prototype of Brer Rabbit.

The little antelope had been going apace; he had been buying up in the market everything that was good and dear, food, drink and the most costly raiment; then, as the moon rose, he would invite his friends, and the drums were beating and the animals were dancing and singing till the first rays of the sun drove them home; and the little antelope paid for everything. One day when after a night's debauchery the little antelope woke, he went to his money bag, but turning it inside out and outside in, he could not find a single cowry in it to buy himself food to break his fast. There had been plenty and now all was gone.

"What does it matter," said the little antelope, "my friends are waiting for me to continue our revelry; I will ask them to lend me some money and we shall again have a good time."

He found his friends at the appointed place, but when he mentioned that he wanted to borrow money they fled in great haste; those who could run ran, those who could fly, flew; the tortoise who could neither run nor fly, drew back into its shell and shut its opening with a snap that sounded like a clap of thunder.

"Dear, dear," said the little antelope; "what am I to do now? My friends having treated me so

shabbily, I will go to my old enemy the jackal and see what he will do for me."

Off he went and found the jackal in front of his house counting a big bag of cowries. "Hundred, hundred and one, hundred and two . . ." The little antelope's mouth watered at the sight of the tremendous amount of money.

"Good morning, Uncle Jackal," he said humbly. "I hope you are in good health, and that your wife is in good health, and your children too!"

"Hm," said the jackal, "hundred and ten, hundred and eleven . . ."

"I came to ask you for a little service . . ."

"Come another day . . . hundred and twenty . . . I am busy to-day . . . hundred and twenty-one . . ."

"Can I come to-morrow?"

"I am going to a wedding to-morrow . . . hundred and thirty . . . I have to clear a field the day after . . . hundred and thirty-one . . . the next day there is a funeral . . . hundred and thirty-two . . . the next day . . ."

"The next day you will have something else to do, I have no doubt. So we might just as well do the business now. I want to ask you a little favour . . ."

"Ask away . . . hundred and forty . . . but I am afraid . . . hundred and forty-one . . . that I won't be able to oblige you . . . hundred and forty-two."

"How do you know? I have not yet told you what I want?"

The jackal sneered; he had heard of the straits his old foe was in. "I just have a premonition . . . hundred and fifty . . ."

"I want you to lend me a few cowries . . ."

The jackal stopped counting. "Lend you money? If you want money, why don't you go to work instead of always seeking your pleasure, you good-for-nothing scamp? Then you will get all the money you want."

"I am itching to work," said the little antelope; "work is a real passion with me."

"Well, then, why don't you?"

"Did you not tell me the other day that I must never give way to my passions?"

The jackal remembered having said something to that effect, but somehow it did not seem to fit in just now. He wondered why. So he grumbled, "Work ought to be a pleasure to honest people."

"Yes, yes," said the little antelope, "quite so. You have just told me that only good-for-nothing scamps always seek their pleasure."

The jackal, stupid as he was, saw now that the little antelope was making fun of him. The little antelope always did it. If only he could get his own back and play some trick on him . . . Suddenly he thought of a hollow tree he had noticed the other day, and a fiendish idea occurred to him.

"I will lend you no money," he said, "because, first of all, I have none; secondly, the little I own I want myself; and thirdly, what I can spare is better in my money-bag than in yours. But I will help you otherwise. I know of a treasure . . ."

"If you know of a treasure, why don't you fetch it yourself?" asked the little antelope, who was on his guard.

"Because it is in a hollow tree, and, hard as I tried, I could not squeeze through its entrance. You are small and slender and I will push behind; you might get in."

This reassured the little antelope ; still, he was afraid that if he did manage to get the treasure the jackal would rob him of it as soon as he had brought it out. So he thought it might be wise to offer him beforehand a big share of it, then he might be honest about the rest.

“ I am willing,” he said, “ but as it is you who have found the treasure, you must take nine-tenths of it as your share.”

“ No, no ; keep it all,” said the jackal, who could be generous—when there was nothing to lose. He knew quite well that there was no treasure in the hollow tree.

Then there began the queerest bargaining the world has ever seen ; every one wanted to give more and to take less money as if they were dealing in blows. At last the little antelope, who was burning with the desire to handle the treasure, said :

“ Let us agree to this : each will have an equal share, and then we will add a little to it so that I shall have more than you and you shall have more than I.”

This seemed to be an equitable arrangement to the jackal, and he proposed starting at once on their treasure-hunt. Soon they came to the hollow tree. The hole was small, but the little antelope, having an empty stomach, and the jackal pushing with all his might from behind, at last in he went. The white spot on his rump had not yet quite disappeared, when the jackal gave a shout of joy and rolled a huge stone in front of the opening.

“ Have you found anything, Uncle Antelope ? ” he asked with malice.

“ Not yet.”

"I have. I have found a good dinner. Now I am going to make a big roaring fire round this tree, and when you are roasted nice and brown, you must come and have dinner with me."

"Oh, do let me out, dear Uncle Jackal, do let me out!" shouted the little antelope in anguish, having discovered too late that he had allowed himself to be tricked by that fool of a jackal.

"Not yet, my friend. I am too busy. Look at all the wood I have to pile up to roast you."

And he went on piling up wood while the little antelope retired to the deepest recess of the hollow, meditating how he could escape. When the jackal had all the wood he wanted, he went to the tree and shouted:

"Hallo, Uncle Antelope!"

There came no answer.

"Hallo, Uncle Antelope!" he shouted again, "are you there?"

"No," answered the little antelope.

"What!" exclaimed the jackal furiously, "how dare you say that, you liar!"

"I am not a liar; I am not here."

"But are you sure of that?" asked the jackal anxiously.

"Well," giggled the little antelope, "who should know better than I? But if you doubt, have a look."

In all haste the jackal removed the twigs and then the stone; as soon as he had done so the little antelope threw some dirt into his eyes, and while he was trying to remove it slipped out of the tree. The blinded jackal was banging his head against the stone, against the tree, and tumbling over the twigs, while the little antelope was running home as fast as he could.



A LUBA HOUSE.

With its characteristic beehive roof of thatch.

BOY WEAVING

The fabric is held in tension by pressure of the feet.

Some say that he stole the jackal's cowries, some say that he did not ; but that is another story.

The stratagem of the little antelope has been slightly altered to suit the taste of my chaste readers. Ngongo stories of an ordinary kind (there are some dealing with subjects not generally debated in polite society) don't require such alterations ; all Bushongo are very careful in avoiding foul words. Ngongo stories can be translated, Luba ones require interpretation, because with them very frequently a word implies ideas which, in civilised languages, require a sentence. Not less than their stories, life is taken seriously by the Bangongo : they work seriously, they think seriously and take their freedom seriously. The average Muluba takes life as it comes, and submits placidly to its vagaries. A visitor, telling his host that he must be going, will be requested by a Mungongo not to hurry ; a Muluba will answer " Go ! " This is not rudeness ; it is as if he meant to say : " You do jolly well as you like ! " The Bangongo have their secret society ; but while the Muluba's organisation of this kind is meant to protect him from imaginary beings, the matter-of-fact Mungongo aimed at other dangers when he founded the Babende Society. Though it has altered to suit present-day conditions, and survived the dangers from which it had to protect its members, it was, no doubt, at its origin, similar to the Fascisti, an illegal association of the younger and more energetic elements of the state against the abuses of the governing classes.

To this day the Babende wear masks at their meetings ; to this day any stranger caught in the act of surprising them is fined ; to this day the friction

drum is played to convoke the assemblies. But of old this drum, called the leopard of the village because of its gruesome wails, was sounded when the Babende had decided to remove some obnoxious person ; the masked horde invaded the village and carried its victim off to be slaughtered ; the corpse was burnt, and the ashes sent to the relatives with the message that the village leopard had eaten him. It is likely that this society reached the country from the West, and that it had originated there, as I hinted, in consequence of the slave trade, when chiefs had been to such an extent demoralised by its practice, that when they could not capture strangers they would sell their own subjects to obtain the alcohol for which they were craving. In self-protection the people united, chose their own leaders and slew the offender. The Baluba never had the grit to do this ; for this reason there are in proportion many more Luba slaves than others, even if one takes their great number into account.

CHAPTER IX

THE BANGONGO—CLOTHING—DIVINATION

IF His Excellency the Viceroy Isambula N'Genga failed to take notice of the mob over which he held sway, his faithful subjects did not miss their opportunity of imitating the fashion set by this arbiter of all the elegancies. Was he not of the ruling tribe, of the ruling caste, of the very ruling family? Had he not come straight from the capital, Mingenja, the centre of their universe? Had he not sat at the feet of the King? Who could aspire to emulate a higher example? Consequently, on festive occasions, all Misumba dressed after this illustrious pattern without, of course, achieving his perfection: Jones of Cardiff may copy a suit of Johns of Clifford Street, but he cannot equal it.

On workadays Bangongo men wear a skirt consisting of a piece of cloth reaching to the knee and wrapped twice round the waist; the part above the belt of twisted hide is folded back and gracefully kilted. The material is woven of raffia. They say that before the reign of Shamba, bark cloth alone was known, and to this day people in mourning use no other material. The women twist their cloth from the left to the right once round their body, then it is folded obliquely and turned once from the right to the left; the end is passed through the belt and

hangs down over the right thigh ; the trunk and the upper part of the buttocks are left exposed. Both sexes dye their bodies red with powder of camwood (*tukula*), the men using it more freely than the women. The upper incisor teeth of men and women are removed at the age of puberty ; this is done by inserting a hoe between the teeth and knocking them out with a mallet. On the forehead the hair is shaven in a straight line ; the rest is drawn back and forms on the back of the head a thick mass, dyed red, which gives the head a very elongated appearance ; on the lower part of the back of the head a crescent-shaped space is shaven from ear to ear, below which about one inch of hair is left. Women expectant of first motherhood arrange their hair so as to form as it were a round cap on the summit, flanked by two wings shaped like buffalo horns. This form of coiffure is also sometimes found worn by old chiefs, and is an archaic headdress ; many old head-shaped cups are carved like that. The most striking part of all Bushongo, Bashilele and Bakongo women's adornment is their cicatrisation. Men rarely have more than the tribal mark cut into the skin ; that of the Bangongo consists of three concentric circles on the temples. The woman's abdomen is covered with a number of conventional patterns, as shown in Fig. 1.

Some of the names vary locally, some of the tribes add to the patterns (like the Bangongo semi-lunar designs on the thighs, etc.), but the above are in general use. The cicatrices are produced by incising the skin with a razor ; they are generally applied one by one, and are finished when puberty is reached ; in some tribes they are supplemented at a more advanced

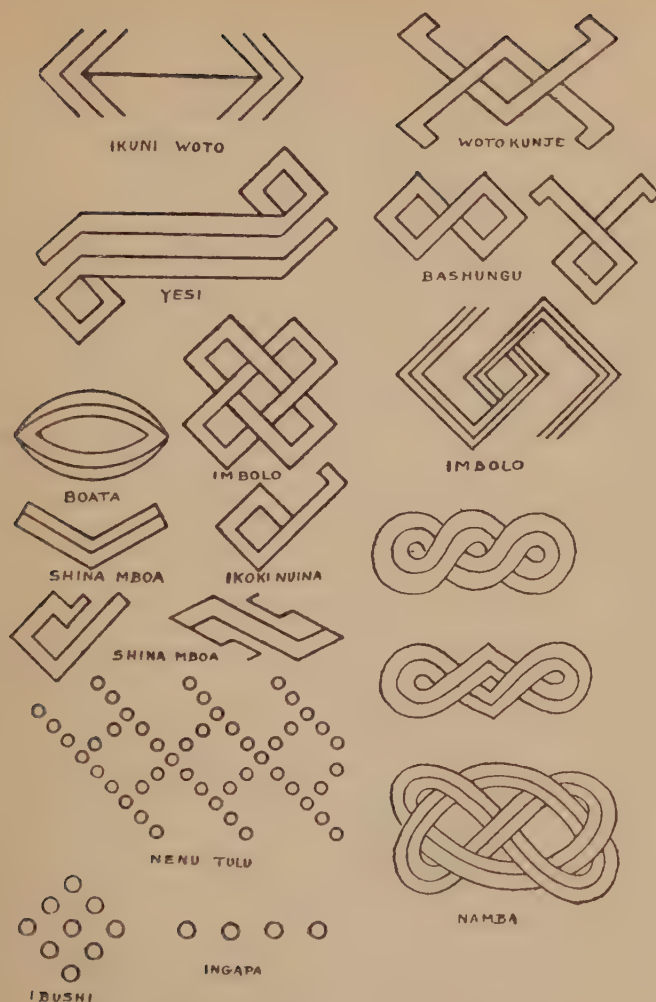


FIG. 1.—TRIBAL MARKS.

Ikuni Woto—Woto's knife.

Woto Kunje—Woto on the Mound.

Yesi—the twins.

Bashungu—the spirits.

Boata—boat.

Imbolo—knot.

Shi Na M'Boa—the dog's tail.

Ikoki Nuina—the back door.

Nenu Tulu—the stars.

Ibushi—the goats.

Ingapa—(?)

Nambi—the bowels.

age. As, on the whole, the effect of these cicatrizations, like those found amongst other tribes, is a pleasing one, it has been generally assumed that, besides marking a person as the member of a certain social unit, they are meant to be ornamental. With the Bushongo they seem to have a deeper meaning. It so happened that, whilst I was making notes on the art of the Bangongo, I asked a woman the name of some of these cicatrices. I was told that one was called "Woto's knife" and another "Woto on the mound." Quite naturally I asked who this Woto was. The good lady was taken aback, refused to answer, and looked like a child who had been telling tales out of school. The fact that she was reluctant to answer me naturally aroused my curiosity, but at the same time put me on my guard to be wary in my inquiries.

I had to wait some time before my opportunity came. One afternoon, the clouds burst over the village, and we enjoyed a thunderstorm which, even for these parts, was of remarkable violence. The darkened sky seemed to be rent in all directions by constant lightning, and the continuous roll of thunder was only now and then interrupted by terrific claps that drowned it in their violence. We had sheltered, Hilton Simpson and I, in the old Bilumbu's hut, when suddenly a greenish light nearly blinded us, and the explosion that followed it, or rather coincided with it, apparently shook the whole place to its very foundations. A tree, distant a few yards from the hut, had been struck, and been reduced to ashes before our eyes.

The ability to seize upon unforeseen events and

turn them to their advantage, is a gift that makes victorious generals, successful politicians and powerful magicians. It was not only a long life and great experience, but also this faculty that had made the Bilumbu what he was, the greatest adept of the magic art in the Bangongo country. He rose to the occasion ; he jumped to his feet, stretched out his bony arm with a commanding gesture, and cast the beast with the fiery tail into the tree to save the village. Several people heard him, and the news soon spread through the place that but for his intervention the whole community would have been destroyed.

As the rain stopped the villagers came flocking to the place to wonder at the proof of their Bilumbu's mastery over the forces of nature, as evidenced by the charred tree ; and old and young brought him tokens of their gratitude in the shape of small presents. These the old man acknowledged by slight nods of the head, but I saw he was very pleased with himself. Far be it from me to suggest that he was an impostor ; I am rather inclined to think that he honestly believed that he had captured the lightning by his invocation. To humour him and dispose him to be communicative I too gave him thanks, and presented him with a hunting knife which for a long while he had watched with covetous eyes ; I spoke some words of praise and wound up by saying : " What would Woto have thought of this ? "

" Woto," he said eagerly, " Woto would have thought nothing of catching lightning ; he could do much greater things than that." Then realising suddenly that he was talking to a benighted foreigner,

he asked me sharply: "What do you know of Woto?"

"Just what the Bankutu told me about him. I suppose it is all wrong, though."

"Of course, it is all wrong if the Bankutu told you. Did they tell you how Woto made trees bear little men?"

"They said it was not true."

The old man rose furiously to the bait: "Not true? May every one of them be carried home in little parcels! If it is not true, whence do the pygmies come? Are the pygmies not true?"

"The Bankutu say that they are born just like ordinary people."

"So they are—now. But not in Woto's time. But what do Bankutu savages know about Woto? They just know how to eat people. Do they know about Bomazi?"

"Nothing. They say nobody knows anything about him."

The poor old man got quite excited and protested that he did know quite a lot and offered to impart his knowledge to me. But first the place had to be cleared of the profane crowd, and the roads leading to the hut barred so as to keep intruders away. This was achieved by putting elders' staffs across them, which proved to be a more effective warning than a German *Verboten* backed by a Prussian policeman. There is not a soul in Misumba who would dare to step over such a staff. Then we had to wait a little while; the sun had not yet set, and there are things it is not wise to mention before the shadows of the night have fallen.



A Luba woman. The cicatrices are in lines forming artistic patterns, which are apparently purely ornamental.



Bushongo woman. The cicatrices form a number of independent designs, each of which has a significance connected with the nation's mythology.

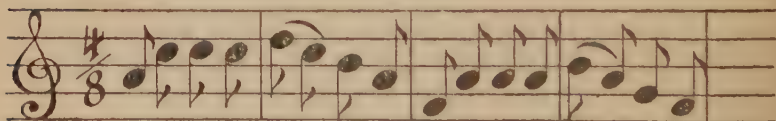
CICATRIZATION.

We formed a quaint group : the old man, all skin and bone, solemn and very much in earnest ; the local chief, much influenced by contact with the white man, disposed to show his superiority by sneers, but fearing lest the Bilumbu might notice them ; then Simpson, I and a youth, Masolo. And the Bilumbu spoke :

“ Long, long ago, far, far from here to the north, at a distance which it would take several months to cover, there lived an old couple on the banks of a mighty river, larger than any we have in this country, even larger than the Sankuru. These two old people, Kindin Jadi and his wife Dolundule, had been married many a year, more years than lasts the life of man in our days, and their hair had turned completely grey ; yet they had no children. One day, as they were sitting in front of their hut, the sky opened and a man came down from it, white in colour, but otherwise just like them. He asked the old couple : ‘ Where are the other people ? ’ and was answered, ‘ There are no other people and there never will be ! We are too old to have any children.’ ‘ That shall not be ! ’ said the heavenly visitor ; ‘ my name is Bomazi and I am the Lord, and I say unto you that a child shall be born to you.’

“ The old people laughed and believed him not, and a month later Dolundule said unto Bomazi : ‘ Seest thou not that thou hast been mistaken ? ’ But Bomazi answered : ‘ Have patience, and thou shalt see ! ’ and after a month had passed the woman perceived that she was with child. Later a daughter was born unto her, and as she grew up Bomazi took this maiden, Bumba Kinda, to his house and made her his wife. Five sons were born unto them, Moelo and Woto,

twins, Etochi, Bambi and Selenga. Each became the chief of a people. Woto, who was the father of all the Baluba, had three wives, Lolo Woto, Lolo Moelo and Banga Woto. One day, returning from the chase, he found the son of Moelo, Swue Woto, with his wife Lolo Woto ; he at once went to the youth's father and complained to him : 'Thou art the son of the same mother as I, and yet thy son betrays my honour ; this is incest indeed. If thou wilt not prevent such a thing happening again, I shall have to leave this country for ever.' Swue promised that he would sin no more, but one day when Woto returned from the chase unexpectedly he found him concealed in the house of his second wife, Lolo Moelo. In a towering rage he returned to his brother and said, 'If thou wilt not banish thy lecherous son from this place, I shall leave it for ever.' Moelo was loath to part with his own son, so Woto fled into the forest. As he did not return for several days his wives went in search of him ; as a sign of repentance they covered their bodies with cicatrices and all Bushongo women have done so ever since. As they were seeking right and left for him they sang the following song :



Kongolo bumba ma-na mana Yulende ifuma dinyoko mana

Nobody knew the meaning of the words, not even the Bilumbu.

"After a long and tiring search they found their lord and succeeded in convincing him of the sincerity

of their repentance ; he returned with them to the village. But shortly afterwards he surprised his nephew with his third wife, Banga Woto, and on this he left the place, determined never to return again. His brothers were much afflicted by his loss, and after waiting for some time it was resolved that three of them, Moelo, Bambi and Selenga, should go with all their people in search of the lost one, while Etochi would remain with his own people to guard the ancestral home. The seekers never returned, and it is they, their warriors and their descendants, who peopled the whole earth.

“ Meanwhile Woto had been wandering in the forest aimlessly till after several months he reached the banks of the Lukenye. Whilst he was roaming in the lonely wilderness he bemoaned his fate bitterly : ‘ How is it that I, the son begotten by Bomazi, born to be a king, should be without a people to rule over ? ’ Being a very clever magician, he sang the following incantation :

‘ Mayam bango meybeku
Lotoko Solo mokeku.’

And as he sang the trees of the forest opened and there came forth from their flanks a great number of little men. Woto asked them : ‘ Who are ye, oh little men ? ’ and they replied in their own tongue, ‘ Binu Batue,’ which means ‘ We are men.’ Ever since, these little hunters have been known as Batue (Batwa). But as the pygmies beheld Woto they exclaimed : ‘ What man is this ? What big eyes he has, what big ears, what a big nose ; how tall he is ! No one can subdue a giant like that, only women will be able to enslave him.’ ”

Here the old man thought it necessary to explain that though at that time the pygmies, born out of hollow trees, were spirits in human shape, times had altered and at present they were just as human as any Mushongo ; but as became the children of the trees they still lived in hives made of dried leaves. If anyone doubts their origin, just let him go into the forest, where he will see the hollow trees whence they have emerged.

"I suppose," I said, "that Etochi remained for ever in his village?"

"No, surely not. He might have, he might be there to this very day, because in those times death was unknown, and such a thing as disease and pain did not exist. But, unfortunately, one day a child was born who had a forked tongue ; Mitete was his name ; as he grew he became very clever, but also very wicked ; it was he who invented disease so that he might get money from people by curing them, and it was he who brought death to the tribe so that the fear of it should bring the sick to him. He practised his art by means of evil spirits and wandering souls. As he saw many of his people suffer and die, Etochi decided to flee the country so as to escape the malice of Mitete ; with all his people he left by stealth and travelled south. But Mitete soon found their tracks and caught up with them. 'Am I not a man, and are ye not men that ye should forsake me?' The people replied, 'Thou hast brought disease and death among us, thou with the evil tongue ; thou shalt not follow us !' and they hit him with their cudgels, struck him with their swords and pierced him with their spears. But so strong was his magical power that no weapon could hurt him,

and they had to suffer his company. Thus disease and death came with them to their new home on the banks of the Sankuru river.”

Thus spoke the old Bilumbu. His version of the origin of his people, which further investigation showed to be an unorthodox local one, was the beginning of my researches for local traditions; once the ice was broken it was much easier to proceed. By telling this version tinged with Basongo Meno ideas, I always roused opposition and was told another, the correct one. Each time something new cropped up, and it was thus that I managed to collect a considerable number of Bushongo traditions.

It was due to the Bilumbu that we were able to observe a very interesting way of divining. A knife had been stolen from my tent, and I complained bitterly about it to the old man. He at once advised me to go and consult the Mikanda, the diviner of the village, of whose professional ability he had the highest opinion. He told me that there was another diviner, the Moashi, who was cheaper, but that he did not have much faith in him. We followed his advice and consulted the greater of the two magicians. We paid our fee and he brought forth his apparatus, which was a carving representing a crocodile with a smooth, flat back. Then a little round disk was produced; this was wetted, and mumbling all the while he slowly rubbed it up and down the back of the “Itombwa”; it seemed to move easily when all of a sudden it stuck. The carved animal was turned upside down, but the disk did not fall. The diviner now invited us to follow him and led us to a hut. We entered, and carefully hidden under all sorts of rubbish we found the

knife! I leave it to the reader to explain this experiment.

Though we were in every way happy at Misumba, we had to make an end to our stay, and then we found it impossible to get carriers. The natives, by their own industry, which was congenial to them, could earn as much money as by carrying my loads; why should they be such fools as to oblige me? The chief did his best—with no result. But in cases like this the anthropologist scores over the ordinary mortal. I sent a message to the chief of the Babende secret society; some trifling presents passed from my possession into his—and the next morning the place was swarming with willing porters.

CHAPTER X

BUSHONGO—A DIRTY VILLAGE—THE KING

I MUST ask the reader to imagine the feelings of a foreigner, ignorant of England, who after visiting Oxford is told: "Yes, it is not bad in its own way, but you ought to go and see Crewe!" and goes and does so. His disappointment cannot exceed mine when I entered the streets of Minganja, the Mushenge (capital) of Bushongo. I had been led to expect marvels and found one of the dirtiest villages I have seen in the Congo. Narrow lanes were bordered by shabby walls loosely made of the leaves of an aquatic plant; these surrounded huts which, though not bad in themselves, looked bare and ugly compared with the dainty houses of Misumba. However, now and then we came on some vestige of a past, the glory of which had departed: this ramshackle house had its doorway supported by a carved pillar of exquisite workmanship, or in front of that hovel a mat was lying, made of cane tied together with string of various colours, such delicate workmanship or such rich colouring I had never seen in Africa, the knots forming a cunning design worthy of their colour. But if the town was disappointing, its inhabitants were not. All men wore the kilt, very like that of the Highlanders, only that the upper part passed over a belt and formed a secondary, narrower band; a leaf-shaped

knife about a foot long with a beautifully encrusted handle stuck in the belt on their right hip ; in front a long pocket of skin, from which the hair had not been removed, dangled like a sporran ; their heads were surmounted by a conical cap of lace-like fibre, fixed to their hair by needles ornamented with a miniature bell. The caps of the elder people were about three inches high, those of the younger sometimes exceeded six. Later we were told that high caps were a new fashion started by the young bloods of the place, but that older and more respectable people refused to imitate their folly. Some caps were of a particular shape, and many of the men wore curious objects round their necks, or hanging from their waists, which seemed to be badges of office. The women wore a great length of cloth wound spirally several times round their body, and it seemed to hang so loosely that one expected it to fall at any moment ; such a thing, however, never happened. The ladies had their heads shaven ; so had the men, except for a thick tuft on the summit to which the cap was pinned.

In the middle of the Mushenge lies the royal enclosure, and at its gate the King met us. His refined strong features had very little of the African about them, and were less negroid than those of many Zanzibar "Arabs" I had known, Tippu Tip for example. The nose was nearly aquiline, and the lips finely curved. The strength of his face was, however, I found out soon enough, foreign to his character ; his very soft melancholy eyes gave a truer picture of his disposition. He was a man who wanted to please everybody, and who had a pathological horror of hurting anyone ; absolute monarch in his dominions,



A BUSHONGO ELDER OF THE BANGONGO SUB-TRIBE.

He is wearing his ceremonial costume and is holding his staff of office.

entitled to divine honours, he could not refuse a request or enforce an order. Accustomed to ruthless tyrants like Bope Mobinji, the elders, at any rate the most important ones, despised him at the bottom of their hearts for his weakness; they, who would have applauded the massacre of all Europeans, who would have revelled in an outburst of royal rage resulting in a hecatomb of victims, could not understand a man who out of sheer kindness of heart erred on the side of clemency. They told me that when old Bope Mobinji (in whose time Dr. Wolf had come to the country's frontier) died, his son had two thousand people killed in his honour, without counting the wives and slaves buried with him. When the present King's sister, of whom he was very fond, died, a similar massacre was expected; and not a single person had been sacrificed! What wonder was it that the realm went to the dogs, and that the Bushongo name, once the proudest in Central Africa, had become a byword in the mouths of their neighbours?

Kwete, or to give him his full name, Kwete Peshanga Kena, Nyimi (king) of Bushongo, Chembe Kunji (God on earth), the Lord's own Lieutenant, came to the throne in the beginning of this century, when the whole of the surrounding country had submitted to European rule, and the white man's influence began to penetrate his country. Till then even the goods of European manufacture, which open the path to the intruder, had been kept out; but inch by inch they gained ground, the goods were followed by the native servants of the trader, then the trader came—and that was the beginning of the end. In 1904 this once great nation made a last effort to

stem the tide : the Bushongo rose against the white man. The King, wiser than his councillors, opposed the war to the last but, as he always did, gave in when he saw that the people wanted it. His indecision, or rather his obvious reluctance, induced the Bangongo to stand aside in the fight, and deprived the nation of its best fighting forces ; the inevitable defeat came, and he who had foretold it was accused by those who provoked it of being the cause of the disaster.

The Belgians showed great clemency ; there was no petty humiliation inflicted on this proud nation—but it had fallen, and by losing its independence it had lost its soul. And the King, the embodiment of everything that was great in it, became a mere figure-head, to whom the great aristocracy paid homage publicly as the highest symbol of their own nobility, but whom they despised and against whom they waged a war of secret opposition. There were two parties in the kingdom : that of the King and that of the Kimi Kambu, the Prime Minister ; the heir-apparent and all the high dignitaries sided with the latter. The younger people were with the Nyimi, while the provinces ignored the great events that divided the capital into factions. The aristocrats had their eyes for ever fixed on the past, and hoped for its resurrection ; the King foresaw this, the development of the country, in friendly collaboration with the white man, and hoped that it might lead to a future worthy of its past greatness. When it came to an open conflict, the King compromised at the expense of his dignity, and as the years passed, Bushongo became an empty name, Nyimi a title without power.

Somehow the King and I struck up a great friendship ; this was no great achievement on my part, as his heart went easily out to one who felt great sympathy for him. He was only too ready to help me, and when I explained to him that I would let the world know the proud history of his country, and that I tried to collect specimens so that all nations might see what the Bushongo could achieve, he promised me his help, and there never was a man who kept his promise more faithfully. In this, as in everything else, he was the perfect gentleman. Every African traveller has tales to tell of the natives' importunity and their begging propensity. To force a gift on the Nyimi required careful diplomacy, whereas, if one expressed before him admiration for anything he possessed, one was sure to find it in one's tent an hour later. When I wanted to buy a thing from him, he always wanted to present me with it ; I remonstrated, and pointed out to him how difficult it was for me under these circumstances to offer to purchase the things I really wanted. " You would not like me to give you things you don't want ? " the Nyimi answered. The same evening he sent a man to me asking me if I could let him have a candle ; naturally I sent it. Next evening he asked for a box of matches ; now this seemed rather curious, as I knew he had just purchased several packets. Then it was a needle, or a little salt, a few nails—always things without any real value, and often such as I knew him to possess in considerable quantities. One day I asked him why he never expressed a wish for something that would be a real present, something valuable, worthy of him and of me. He seemed embarrassed,

and finally admitted blushinglly that he had made his daily requests with the wish only to put me at my ease to ask him for anything I might want !

Not everybody was like the Nyimi ; far from it. There was the heir-apparent, the Buimbi, who as Bope Mobinji II, succeeded his brother a few years later. Bope would send his aide-de-camp several times a day, asking for this and for that, practically making free of our possessions. This went on for a time, till one day his messenger was overheard by the Nyimi. Questioned closely, the man admitted that he had been constantly running to me for things required by his master. " And what did the Buimbi ever send in return ? " the King asked. The man knew of no present given to me. The Nyimi was angry, but even more than that, he was ashamed—ashamed that his brother could act like that. We were very sorry for him, and I did my best to smooth matters over, telling him that not every one could be as generous as he, and that he had been open-handed enough for the whole family.

Half an hour later a cortège came towards our tents ; the Buimbi accompanied by all his court. He spoke very humbly, yet I saw that rage was gnawing at his heart. He came to apologise—he who hated foreigners bitterly had, by the orders of his brother, to abase himself before one ! I stopped his speech, shook hands, made him sit down, offered him a glass of wine and cigarettes, and made a great fuss of him. He had brought me a present, and never was a present given with a sorer heart. It was a lovely couch of beautiful old workmanship, ornamented with a ram's head ; it can be seen in the ethnographical gallery

of the British Museum. He hoped I would not accept it, but this would have been against my professional conscience. So I took him aside and told him to send one of his confidential slaves at night to me when I would send him a present of which the Nyimi knew nothing. He naturally agreed, and the objects I gave him were of such value that they reconciled him to the loss of his couch. This proved to be one of the best investments I made, this and the presents I secretly sent to all the leaders of the xenophobe party. Suddenly I found that, though they continued to hate the foreigners, they made me an exception, and that I had become a privileged person. One after the other the great aristocrats, who would have nothing to do with any white man, came to call on me, and I treated them in such a way that I made several friends amongst them. I think that nothing appealed more to them than my real interest in their country's history, and they were impressed by the fact that, thanks to the Bilumbu of Misumba, I seemed to know something about it.

My long conversations with them made the political situation clearer to me than it had seemed at first. Its intricacy had its source in the dual position of the Nyimi as temporal and spiritual chief. As the Prime Minister explained to me, to such people as the Bangongo and the Bangendi, the Nyimi was the King, the political chief of the country; if they rebelled theirs was a political crime. But to the Bambala, the ruling tribe, he was also the head of the clan, the spiritual chief, the living representative of the founder, and, as such, sacred. Hence their frenzied jealousy of his honour; an insult to him was

an insult to all the members of the clan, dead, living and not yet born. They wanted him to defend this, their honour, at the risk of his life, at the risk of the nation's existence. Nothing mattered so long as honour was satisfied. There was not one amongst them who would not have freely given his life to save the head of the clan the slightest humiliation ; as Chembe Kunji they loved him tenderly, and resented the fact that he would not allow them to die for him. Their animosity was against the King, the Nyimi, who permitted the humiliation of the Chembe Kunji. A comparison with Japan, in the middle of the last century, is forced on one's mind, but Kwete was the Shogun and the Mikado in one person ; while the aristocratic party wanted him to be like Iyemitsu, he wanted to be the Keiki of his country. In his own clan his position is really a more exalted one than that of the Mikado in Japan, for while in the latter country only part of the population professes the Shinto religion, the Bambala are all ancestor worshippers, and the Nyimi is the living link that alone can join them through the chain of his one hundred and twenty predecessors to Bumba, the founder. The spirit of Bumba lives in every one of them ; it is the life of the living, the memory of the dead, the hope of future generations. It is his spirit that makes the moon wane and increase, that makes the sun shine ; it is his spirit that in shape of rain quenches the thirst of the soil after the months of drought ; it is his spirit that makes the seeds germinate and presides over the reproduction of all that lives. This spirit is incarnated in the Chembe Kunji, and Kwete is Chembe Kunji ; any weakening of his power, every

affront to his dignity sends a tremor through all and everything that shares his spirit and pushes it towards the abyss of annihilation.

When the Prime Minister spoke of these things, fanatical passion shone in his glowing eyes, and his voice broke with emotion. Very old, with handsome sharp features, this tall lean man (son of a former Nyimi) had the eloquence of the apostle and the sincerity of the martyr. The disaster he dreaded was not the collapse of his country, this was no more than an episode in the cataclysm; it was the destruction of the spiritual world, which, in his eyes, was the only thing that mattered.

The Nyimi, too, spoke to me of these things at night when, after all the villagers had gone to rest, he came to see me, alone with his devoted servant, Shamba Shamba. He, too, was deeply moved. But while the Kimi Kambu always reminded me of a follower of Mohammed preaching the jehad, the holy war, the Nyimi seemed to be animated by the gentle spirit of Buddha, which inspired Sivi to sacrifice his own flesh to redeem the dove without injustice to the hawk. He wanted his people to be happy—nothing else mattered. He, too, was proud of its past; he, too, wanted its greatness to revive; his ideal was Shamba Bolongongo, the cultural hero of Bushongo. The Kimi Kambu wanted to save the spirit by the sword; he, the Nyimi, wanted to vanquish the sword by the spirit. There was no common ground on which these two idealists could meet.

CHAPTER XI

A MOURNING CEREMONY—BUSHONGO HISTORY

THE Nyimi had asked us to be present at a ceremony when the end of the period of mourning for his sister was to be celebrated.

It took place in a big open space near the village, the equivalent of the English village green. A dais had been erected for the King, and a carved elephant tusk had been stuck into the ground for him to lean on. In former times, when the Nyimi went on a journey, such a tusk was erected in every village where he stopped, and remained there as a memento of the great event. Thanks to the Nyimi I was allowed to take one which marked the passage of Shamba Bolongongo (*ca.* 1600); its antiquity is obvious, and it has now found a resting-place in the British Museum.

A great crowd had assembled. When the Nyimi arrived I did not know him at first: he had shaved his thick black beard (a rare ornament among the Bantu of the Congo) and the hair of his head, which had been allowed to grow during the period of mourning. He was dressed in scarlet, and his cap was ornamented with the feathers of the crested eagle, the sacred bird of his clan. He sat down on the dais, and was surrounded by the grandees of his kingdom. First, there were some invocations spoken

by some elders, to which the crowd answered in chorus. Then some men danced singly in front of the King, brandishing wooden war-knives and axes. Then about ten old women danced a very slow, solemn dance; I was told that they were "age-sisters" of the deceased princess. Finally, the Nyimi rose, being helped to his feet by two elders. He began to walk stiffly, as if reluctantly, the crowd cheering him on. Gradually his pace became quicker, and his gait more elastic; finally he danced the whole time whilst the drums beat furiously, onlookers clapped their hands, and the royal ladies cheered.

In the evening, the Nyimi came to see us; he sat on a European chair with one leg curled up under him; the other foot rested on the leg of his friend and servant, Shamba Shamba, who sat on the ground. This was a survival of an ancient custom, which the Nyimi had quite recently abolished: it had been the rule that the King was never allowed to touch the ground; he was carried on men's shoulders when he had to change his place, and when he sat down it was on the back of a slave. The Nyimi would have none of this, but had to satisfy public opinion by this symbolical act of resting his foot on a human body. After a time some of the great councillors, who correspond in Bushongo to the ministers in Europe, came to see us too. There was the Kimi Kambu, the Prime Minister, who came leaning on a slave boy; he did not do this because he required support, the boy was his staff of office; in public he had to hold him by the neck. Then came the Chikala, the Epanchula, the Nyanga, and the Nyimi Shongo, the representatives of the four provinces of the kingdom.

The first had over his shoulder a hatchet with a quaint single blade (Fig. 2) and an iron bar as a staff; the Nyimi Shongo had a hatchet with two entwined blades (Fig. 3), and he was the only elder who wore an animal skin on his head in lieu of the usual cap. The Nyanga had a kind of rake with four teeth, and the Epanchula a hatchet of another shape. Then came the Nyibita, a much younger man than the others, the minister for war, and at the same time a judge of offences committed by armed attack; he



FIG. 2.—CEREMONIAL
HATCHET OF THE CHIKALA.



FIG. 3.—CEREMONIAL HATCHET OF
THE NYIMI SHONGO.

had a bell hanging from his left shoulder (Figs. 4 and 5), another from his waist, heavy copper bracelets twisted in spirals on his arm, and a staff of iron in his hands. The cabinet meeting would have been complete except for the absence of its two women members: the Katenge and the Bana. Both have to be daughters of former kings, but the Katenge ranks above the other. The origin of her high position, connected with the discovery of fire-making, has been told in another book: *Camp and Tramp in African Wilds*. She wears on her waist a belt similar to that of the

Nyibita, and in time of peace she has a bowstring wound round her neck. If war is declared, she hands this bowstring solemnly to the Nyibita; thus the decision, if there shall be an armed conflict, rests finally with this woman, who has a right to refuse her consent if she thinks that "women shall be made orphans, widows, or deprived of their sons without justification."

These men had come to inform me of the history



FIG. 4.—BELL SUSPENDED
FROM THE LEFT SHOULDER.



FIG. 5.—BELL SUSPENDED FROM
THE WAIST OF THE NYIBITA.

of the Bushongo; each spoke in turn, the Nyimi included, and when a slip was made, the others were quick to correct it. All the men did so—except the Nyibita. This valiant warrior seemed to be rather a man of action than of words; nobody doubted his courage, but as for his intellectual capabilities they did not seem to inspire his colleagues with much respect. When it was his turn to speak one of them sat behind him and prompted him; he simply repeated what he was told. We sat up late in the night, and this is

what I was told about the mythology of the Bushongo ; the beginning is very like Genesis, but it seems impossible that it should have been derived from Christian sources.

In the beginning there was darkness and the earth was all covered with water ; in this chaos, Bumba, the Chembe (God), reigned alone. Chembe was of human shape, but of enormous size, and white of colour. One day he felt great pain in his belly and began to vomit ; first he vomited the sun, then the moon and then the stars ; thus there was light. Then, under the influence of the sun, the water began to evaporate, and sandbanks appeared on the surface ; but these sandbanks, like the waters from which they had risen, were devoid of all animal and vegetable life. Then Bumba vomited again, and originated the leopard, the crested eagle, the crocodile, the minnow, the tortoise, the lightning (an animal like a black leopard with a fiery tail), the egret, a scarab and the goat. Then he vomited men innumerable, but only one of them was white like him, that was Loko Yima.

The animals he had created now bestirred themselves to people the earth : the egret vomited all the birds (except the hawk) ; the crocodile all the snakes and the iguana ; the goat all the horned beasts, the minnow all the fish, and the iguana all the hornless beasts. After that, one of the men, Nyonye N'Gana, vomited the white ants, but such was the effort he had to make that he died. Out of gratitude the white ants went to the bowels of the earth and fetched mould ; with this they covered the sterile sands and buried their creator in it. Chonganda vomited a

plant from which all vegetable life sprang ; another man, Chedi Bumba, tried to create something new and vomited the hawk, but nothing else.

Thus was the world we know to-day created. When the work of creation was over, Bumba visited all the villages and said to each : " Behold the wonderful things I have made ; make free use of them all, but I order you to abstain from eating such and such a thing." Thus every village received its Ikina Bari, or taboo, though a few were forgotten and have none. Any man breaking the taboo would fall ill and die.

Everything seemed to go well with Bumba's creation, except the lightning animal, which became troublesome ; Bumba finally banished it from the earth to the sky. But now men did not know how to obtain fire, so Bumba gave the animal leave to return to the earth now and then, but every time it did so it managed to do some havoc. But people procured fire from the trees it had struck, and this was then carefully kept going in the village.

Having accomplished his task, Bumba called his three best men, Loko Yima, who was white, and Yele and Dumachwa, who were black, and spoke as follows to them : " Yele, you shall be the lord of the Bangongo ; you Dumachwa, lord of the Bangendi ; but you, Loko Yima, you shall be Chembe Kunji (God on earth), and Yele and Dumachwa shall pay you tribute." Having thus spoken, he rose in the air and disappeared in the sky. Thus Loko Yima became supreme chief of humanity.

Near the dwellings of man there was a big lake containing palm-wine instead of water ; anyone who was thirsty could go there and fetch the wine he

required. One day a woman called Nanchamba polluted the lake, but was caught in the act by a man called Boyo Bumba, who upbraided her, saying: "Are ye not ashamed to pollute the lake whence all people obtain their drink? I shall denounce you to the village folk." This he did, and all the people refused henceforth to drink of the lake. The next day Boyo Bumba came again to the village, and said: "Behold how we have been punished for this woman's fault; the lake has dried up." This was the truth; the lake had disappeared, and in its place there was a hollow where four kinds of unknown trees were growing: these were named Shamba, Mibondo Ikari and Diana (*elæis*, *raphia vinifera*, *raphia Laurentii* (?) and *Borassus* (?)). The people paid little heed to them, and kept on weeping over the loss of their lake. Years passed; the trees grew strong and tall and formed a dense forest where the lake had been. One day, however, a pygmy, called Bunyi, reasoned like this: "Whither has the lake gone? Have not the trees sucked it up? I will make a hole in one and see what its sap is like." This he did; he climbed one of the palms, and near its summit made a hole, but no sap flowed from it. He went home, giving up his quest; but in his dream he saw an apparition, which addressed him as follows: "What use is a good idea without perseverance; go and try again." Next morning Bunyi returned to the tree and beheld a thin trickle of sap flowing from the hole he had made; he tasted it and found it sweet, so he placed a pot underneath and returned to the village without saying anything about his discovery. Day by day he obtained more sap and required a bigger

pot to collect it, and day by day the liquid became stronger. One day, having emptied his biggest pot full of palm-wine, he came back to the village drunk ; he became disorderly, and was taken before the King. The King asked him the reason of his extraordinary conduct, but Bunyi refused to tell him except in secrecy. When he had privately told his story, the King sent a messenger to verify it ; finding it confirmed, the King announced the great news to the people, and all went and collected the seeds of the palms, which they planted all over the country. But to this day no man will drink alone, he must always ask a friend to partake of his palm-wine lest he should get drunk.

After Loko Yima's death his only daughter succeeded him ; it was she who taught people how to construct houses. She had two sons, Woto and Nyimi Longa, and two daughters, Bengela, and one whose name must never be mentioned. She was succeeded by her eldest son, Woto, who was the first to give every person a name ; it was he to whom Bumba revealed in a dream the use of iron, and it was he who introduced circumcision. During his reign the poison ordeal was invented.

He lived in a place called Buyengela, when one day he fell in love with his own sister (the nameless one), and and she bore him a son called Nyimi Lele. They kept their shame secret for a time, but as it became public, there was such an outcry of indignation amongst the people that Woto had to order his son to leave the country. With his adherents, Nyimi Lele travelled till he reached the River Katembo (the *Loange*), which he followed, and there he founded the nation

of the Bashilele (sons of Lele), and his descendants were their chiefs. But his departure was not enough to calm public sentiment; people said, "Shall the man, who is worse than a beast, continue to govern us?" At last Woto lost patience; he called his pygmy advisers and told them that he had decided to leave the country in search of another kingdom whither the news of his shame had not yet penetrated; but before leaving he wanted to revenge himself on the people whose persecution had driven him from his home: he was going to kill all their fowls and to make their millet rot. He also resolved that the next morning he would convoke the people and make the first person who responded to his appeal, however low his estate, his successor in the kingship. One of the pygmies, however, was a friend of his brother, Nyimi Longa; he went at once to him and informed him of Woto's plan. "Don't sleep to-night," he said, "but be on your guard, and when you hear your brother call, hasten to him and say: 'Here am I.' Nyimi Longa watched all the night. Next morning, before sunrise, Woto called his pygmies and his wife, Ipopa; the latter brought him a cock, a hen and some millet, with which he made such powerful magic that all the fowls died, and the millet rotted in the land of the Bushongo. Then Woto called out: "Come, come quickly!" and his brother, Nyimi Longa, ran to him. Woto did not recognise him in the semi-darkness and said: "I am leaving the country and you shall be king in my stead." So saying he stuck two feathers of the crested eagle, insignia of kingship, into his hair. Now the rest of the people came flocking in; the sun rose, and Woto

beheld that, against his intentions, he had bestowed the royal dignity on his brother. Furiously he turned to the pygmies and asked: "Who has betrayed me?" But they all denied guilt, and the culprit was never discovered. Addressing the assembled people he now said: "I am leaving this country with all my slaves to find a new home; should I find a country of abundance I shall send you news and you may rejoin me. Meanwhile, my brother, who has tricked me, shall be your chief."

He set fire to his village and departed. But his wife, Ipopa, who had been delaying, nearly perished in the conflagration; in her hurry to escape she knocked her foot against a log and wounded it. To stop the bleeding she put some ashes on the wound. Now it so happened that the village was surrounded by those aquatic plants from which salt is obtained, and naturally the ashes smarted in the wound. To stop the pain, Ipopa sucked it and was struck with the pleasant taste of the ashes. She told her people of it, but no one would believe her. To convince them she put some ashes into water and made them taste it; since then ashes were used to season food, till later on the extraction of salt was discovered by accident.

Woto and his followers travelled for weeks, months and years, always towards the south. One day his wife gave birth to twins, and to commemorate this event he ordered his slaves never to shave their heads again.

Meanwhile Nyimi Longa reigned at home, but because of Woto's curse, which had made the fowls die and the millet rot, the people were in danger of perishing of starvation. Consequently he sent his six most trustworthy men after his brother to ask him to

remove the enchantment. They succeeded, and these six men, for having saved the kingdom, shared for ever after the power of the king, and their successors still bear their names : the Kimi Kambu, the Chikala, the Epanchula, the Nyanga, the Nyibita and the Nyimi Shongo ; they are the great councillors of the kingdom. Nyimi Longa's reign was prosperous, and it is from him that the title of Nyimi is derived.

He was succeeded by Minga Bengela, his sister's son, whom he commanded never to forget his uncle Woto ; consequently, after reigning a few years, the young king went with all his people in search of him. They travelled south, crossing four great rivers (Ubangi, Congo, Bussira and Lukenye) till they reached the Sankuru, where he divided them into three groups : the Bangongo whom he sent east, the Bangendi whom he sent south-east and his own Bushongo who went south ; thus they occupied the present territory of the kingdom. It was here that they first learned to cultivate Indian corn ; till then they had lived on millet, plantains and yams.

CHAPTER XII

THE CRESTED EAGLE—AN EMBARRASSING OFFER—
JONES—RULERS

NO present we gave to the King gave him greater pleasure than that of a crested eagle. Whilst in Misumba I had found out that this bird was the totem bird of the Nyimi's clan, and, when, by sheer accident, the opportunity occurred of purchasing a fine adult specimen I did so with the intention of taking it to the Mushenge. I got this bird from an agent of the Kasai Company ; with its wings spread out it measured over six feet and was decidedly royal in appearance, as it was royal in its tastes too—it refused to touch anything that was not presented alive to it. So it was given every day a fowl, and it would then pounce at once on its victim and tear it to pieces. One day, however, when it was given a black hen it refused to take any notice of it ; it looked at it with its head awry, but did not move. The poor fowl was panting with fear in a corner. Time passed, and still the eagle remained passive. I was just wondering how I might get the chicken out again so as to save it further agony, when I perceived that it had lost all fear and begun to walk about in the cage ; at first it kept fearfully away from the eagle, but by and by it laid all precautions aside and picked at the bones left over from yesterday's meal, with the habitual

stupidity and greed of the fowl. The eagle followed it with watchful eyes, without moving. I came to the conclusion that it must have some gastric trouble or lack of appetite, so I left it and went to attend to my own business.

Next morning I still found the hen perfectly well and quite at home in the cage, consequently I did not think it necessary to provide the eagle with any food—if it were hungry, there was the black fowl ready to be eaten. But no, the next day the fowl was still alive and was sitting on the eagle's perch actually leaning against the big bird which, at my approach, became restless and gave all the signs of a ravenous appetite. I called out to a boy to bring another chicken, and I made it a point that this one should also be a black one. It had scarcely been thrust into the cage when the eagle rushed at it and tore it to pieces—and behold, the other fowl came up to it and pecked away at the leavings, the cannibal! After this the hen lived on with the eagle; it was let out daily from the cage, but regularly returned and waited for admittance. While it was away the eagle followed it with its eyes as long as it could, and greeted its return with unmistakable signs of joy.

The respect the natives in the Bushongo country paid to this captive bird was astonishing; they came to admire it, clapped their hands in sign of respect, the chiefs vied with one another who should provide it with food, and many people offered us presents for the royal bird—beads, palm-wine and similar appropriate things.

I have mentioned that the Bambala, the Nyimi's clan, pay special honour to this bird; none would have

killed or eaten it. But there were certain things connected with it which I could never get explained; not only did one of the dignitaries, whose duty it was to inspire fear, wear two of its feathers in the corners of his mouth, but in folk-lore, whenever a thing happened which we would express as "he saw red" or "he was out for blood and murder," the Bushongo said: "He put two feathers of the crested eagle in the corners of his mouth."

By now I had become a great man in the kingdom. I was made a member of the higher nobility with the title of Migenja, derived from the name of the capital; I was of the Great Council and, what was more in the eyes of the people, I was seen constantly in secret conclave not only with the King, but also with the grandees who made no secret of their hatred of the white man. It is to this social distinction and the unlimited wealth I was supposed to possess that I must attribute the following misadventure—not to my personal charms.

One evening a small boy came and brought me a fowl and two eggs; when I wanted to pay him for this very welcome addition to our now more than scanty larder he refused to take anything, telling me that they had been sent as a present. By whom? By a lady!

Hilton Simpson thought this a very good opportunity for giving vent to some doubtful witticisms. I treated his facetious remarks with the contempt they deserved. But when I received the next evening a bunch of bananas, and the evening after some green corn, his sarcastic remarks became unbearable, all the more so as he ate more than his share of the delicacies thus provided. After these preliminaries I was not

in the least astonished when the Prime Minister came to see me one morning, and, after extolling my qualities and pointing out that I was not like the other white man, formally proposed that I should settle in the place and marry his daughter. In those early Edwardian days, as some people may still remember, it was not usual for damsels to send their fathers to propose to young men ; consequently, this was my first offer of marriage, and it embarrassed me considerably. I could not tell the old gentleman to go and speak to mother, and I did not dare to refer him to Hilton Simpson, because, just as much to annoy me as to secure a further supply of chickens, eggs, bananas, and green corn (of which he was inordinately fond, and with which he used to gorge himself disgracefully), he was quite capable of clinching the bargain on the spot. Simpson proceeded to tell me that, even if the lady was not charming, though he was sure of the contrary, it was my duty to marry her, as my connection with the Kimi Kambu would be of great advantage in collecting specimens ; furthermore, I could obtain from my wife such information as is usually withheld from men. He said I owed it to the British Museum, to science, etc. I answered that, as he seemed to approve of such a political alliance, and I did not, he was the boy to contract it. I told him that I was devoid of all ambition while he was simply devoured by it ; now, as the Kimi Kambu's son-in-law he might succeed his father-in-law in his office ; nay, in marrying his daughter, he might even qualify for the dignity of Nyibilumbu (see Chapter XIV, p. 156) of Bushongo. All he could answer was to throw his boot at me,

an argument which did neither hit nor confound me.

I asked Simpson to tell the old nobleman that I was married ; I don't like to tell lies myself. Simpson, meaning well, no doubt, told the Kimi Kambu that I was already a much married man, that I had spouses by the score, many more than I knew what to do with. The explanation was accepted, and, if possible, raised me in the estimation of the Kimi Kambu and the other elders. I had all the time imagined that the presents had been preliminary to this proposal, and had been sent by the Kimi Kambu's daughter ; so I was rather astonished at receiving another, a small basket full of beans, the very evening of her father's visit. Hilton Simpson again tried to be funny, and said that, as Stanley had been called the Stone Breaker (Bula Matadi), I would be known to posterity as the Heart Breaker (Bula M'Tima), He pointed out to me what a good thing Pierre Loti had made out of his love affairs with outlandish beauties, and he would have gone on if we had not been interrupted suddenly by the appearance of a highly excited young woman (not the Kimi Kambu's daughter) who seized me by the arm and told me that her own people had tried to kill her because she wanted to marry me, and asked me to protect her. The comedy had suddenly become a tragedy ; the poor girl was obviously off her head. I tried to calm her, and finally prepared some potassium bromide for her and asked her to take it. She would not ; she sat down on a chair and refused to move away. It was very distressing ; her people were shouting at us to be careful because she might become violent at any moment. They told

me (and I knew some of them were reliable honest folk) that they would not hurt the poor girl; if only I could get out of sight she might follow them home. So Simpson and I entered the tent by one side and left it by the other; we had, however, gone only a few steps when the poor demented creature, who had followed us into the tent, discovered our subterfuge and tried to find us. We ran for all we were worth, dodging through the narrow and low gates from courtyard to courtyard; she would have caught us all the same if Jones, my servant from the Lower Congo, had not deceived her by running in the opposite direction, and talking loudly as if he were addressing me. She lost our track, and when she saw she could not find us she returned quietly to her home; but it was hours before Simpson and I dared to go to ours. The next day the poor girl was sent to some relatives in another village.

This incident had other unpleasant consequences. Jones, proud of having saved me, got drunk. Jones was the best servant that ever lived; a Mukongo, of that race whose superhuman energy as porters had made the beginnings of the Congo Free State a possibility, he was honest, industrious, obedient, well-mannered with the natives (a rare thing for such a great person as a gentleman's gentleman) and of a cheerful disposition; he was all that when sober, and he was sober for months on a stretch. But when he drank, he got fighting drunk, and as he was, though a very short man, immensely strong, he became a public danger. Well, to celebrate his victory, he had bought a few pots of palm-wine, and the first thing we knew about it was that he was running through

the village with a big kitchen knife in his hand bent on murder. The way the Bushongo warriors scattered before him was a sight ! Both Simpson and I went to tackle him ; he never went for us, but we could not get at him. Finally, I got hold of a long stick and tried to disable him, but when I hit low he jumped over my blow, when I hit high he dodged under it. Finally, Simpson got within reach and knocked him down—breaking, unfortunately, his hand on his jaw. I put handcuffs on him, and two Bushongo warriors on guard ; between these tall people, who overshadowed him by a good head and half, he looked like a little boy. The next thing that happened was that first one, then the other Bushongo fell down ; Jones had tripped them with his foot ! Finally he was secured, and I sent him to the Nyimi with the message that, as he had broken the peace in his village, he had better be dealt with according to the law of the country. He was kept under guard for the night, but released the next morning, as the Nyimi would not punish my servant. I had to dismiss him ; I did it very reluctantly, because I liked him, and he was in every other way a splendid fellow. We missed him many times during the latter part of the expedition.

The meetings with the King and the grandees continued, and I was told the most salient parts of the country's history. They were all very keen ; the idea that the great events of their past should be recorded on paper, i.e. in a way which to them meant their secure preservation from oblivion, appealed to them immensely, and they vied with one another in giving me all the information they possessed. I was given the whole list of the previous rulers, one hundred

and twenty names, including the divine founder ! This would seem a more remarkable feat of memory than it really is, because not only is there an official historian, the Moaridi, who has to teach it to the young, but every king, on his accession, has to recite it as an indispensable part of the coronation ceremony ; consequently people of the royal family are taught it at a very early age and never forget it. Some of the rulers are empty names, and the earlier ones belong more to mythology than to history. Muchu Mushange is famous because in his reign the making of fire was invented ; Gokare, as the last female chief who ascended the throne when there were male members of the royal family eligible. With the eighty-sixth ruler we are quite on historical ground ; this was Miele, who must have reigned about A.D. 1500. When I wrote in collaboration with Mr. T. A. Joyce, of the British Museum, a purely ethnographical monograph on this people, I recorded the fact that Miele was famous as a smith, and that it was said that in his reign even human figures were forged in iron, but that I could find none in Bushongo, though the King had affirmed that some had been preserved, but had recently passed into the hands of a Belgian officer. Thirteen years later I went accidentally into the Museum of the Butchers' Guildhall in Antwerp, which contains amongst its antiquities a collection of African objects, and there the figures the King had spoken of were glaring at me ! Their antiquity, their origin, were beyond all doubt ; the heads might have been copied from some Bushongo cups in the British Museum. Artistically they may not be of great value ; but as documents of the early development

of the iron industry of Central Africa they are priceless.

I should like to record the different ways in which my informants spoke of the various periods of their country's past. Creation, Woto, Nyimi Longa, were treated with reverent awe; there was no talking, it was a recitation of stories, and now and then the reciter was suddenly interrupted by the others, not for a mistatement, but for the use of a wrong word. After that the account became vague, the men seemed to be groping, and when asked for the successor of a certain king had to rattle off a string of names learned by heart leading up to the point in question. These kings meant very little to them: they were too human to rank with the semi-gods of the heroic times, and they were so distant that their names were the only thing surviving in people's memory. When we reached Shamba Bolongongo we were on different ground. Before the learned assembly mentioned his name, I had been crammed chock-full with stories connected with him. Already at Misumba I was told twenty times a day of "Samba Mikepe," and every possible wonder was attributed to him; his sayings were continuously quoted. A man made an unreasonable request to another. He was answered: "As Samba said: 'Get up from your loom that I may weave my cloth,'" and the solicitous person was shamed into silence. At a lawsuit, one of the parties did not put in an appearance—the suit went against him because Samba had said that he who is at fault will avoid discussing matters. A witness would speak of events he had heard of—he was interrupted and reminded that Samba

had said : " Let him speak who has seen with his eyes."

A man had trouble with his wives, and for his edification the following story, attributed to Samba, was told : " A man had two dogs, a black one and a red one, and every day, when he had finished his meal, he divided the remains into two equal shares, and gave them to his pets. One day the villagers had killed some very big animal ; was it a buffalo, or an elephant ? Who knows ? The man received a thigh as his share, and he liked it so much that, when he had finished with it, there was not a scrap of meat left on it ; his efforts to break it in two failed. ' Well, let them gnaw it together,' he said, and threw the bone to his dogs. They both went for it, growled at each other, and soon were fighting furiously, so furiously that both died of their wounds. The man saw his mistake at last. Let every dog have his bone and every woman her husband, and there will be peace in the village."

They really meant it when they said, " As long as women bear children the name of Samba will be remembered."

CHAPTER XIII

HISTORY CORROBORATED BY AN ECLIPSE—REFORMS OF SHAMBA—THE SHONGO

ONE of the great difficulties in dealing with the history of primitive peoples is the absolute absence of reliable dates. There was not a soul in Bushongo who could have told us if twenty-five years ago Bope Mobinji had been the Nyimi or not. We knew, of course, from Dr. Wolf who had been in the region at that period, that it was so ; but as for native sources, we were told that it was long, long ago ; even the Kimi Kambu, the son of Bope Mobinji, could tell us no more. There was a very old lady in the village, "so old that she had had grandchildren before the mother of the present king had been born." The king must have been born about the 'seventies, his mother at least fifteen years earlier—but, of course, all this was empty speculation ; the old lady may have been anything between sixty and a hundred years old. But fortune favoured me. As the elders were talking of the great events of various reigns, and we came to the ninety-eighth chief, Bo Kama Bomanchala, they said that nothing remarkable happened during his reign, except that one day at noon the sun went out, and there was absolute darkness for a short time. When I heard this I lost all self-control ; I jumped

up and wanted to do something desperate ; the elders thought I had been stung by a scorpion ! It was only months later that, through the kindness of Dr. Knobel, the date of the eclipse became known to me ; but I may just as well mention that there was no doubt left that it was the 30th of March, 1680, when there was a total eclipse of the sun, passing exactly over Bushongo, the conjunction being at 10.33' Greenwich time, which makes in our longitude, 11.58'—two minutes before noon ! There was no possibility of confusion with another eclipse, because this was the only one visible in the region during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

As there were three reigns between that of Shamba Bolongongo and of Bo Kama Bomanchala, and the great king's as well as that of his two successors had been of more than usual length, we cannot be far out from the truth if we put the beginning of Shamba's rule at 1600, or thereabouts.

A Central African king, of the early days of the seventeenth century, not a warrior but a man of peace, whose only conquests were on the fields of thought, public prosperity and social progress, and who is still remembered in our days by every person in his country, man, woman and child, and is talked of with the greatest veneration as "the great," must have been a remarkable man indeed. To the Bushongo he is King Alfred and Harun Al Rashid and Charlemagne all in one person. Anything good the common people attribute to him ; known among the Bangongo as "Shamba of the Bonnet," by the Bangendi as "Shamba of the Middle," he is to this day as much beloved amongst the warrior tribes of the outlying

provinces as among the effeminate nobles of the capital. I found the same stories told of him in the capital as in the provinces ; details, of course, differed, but the sense remained the same. Thus, both agreed that tobacco was imported first in the time of Shamba ; but while according to the Bangongo it was brought by Lusana Lumunbala from the Bapende country, the Bambala said that it was Lokono Lon Pene (Lokono the Mupende), who had first made it known. All people mentioned how Shamba travelled westwards, far, far away, before ascending the throne ; but while the historian of the capital gives a list of people whom he visited, easily identified, the Bilumbu could speak only of unknown countries. Naturally the common people weave legends round their national hero ; to this day, when one goes far enough from the capital, one finds such things as the invention of the use of palm oil attributed to him ; for is not the name of the elais palm *Shamba* ? And when it comes to things proper to women—Shamba's wife, Kashashi, does all that is necessary.

Shamba, although he must have been a very busy man, as I shall show, still found leisure to invent moral stories for his people ; they are still told, and are known all over the country. Some of them are pretty and short enough to be quoted, such as the following :

“ When one makes the first incision in a palm tree, the sap obtained is very sweet and without strength. But day by day the strength of the liquor increases, while it becomes less and less sweet, till at last the wine becomes strong, but harsh and devoid of sweetness. Man is like palm-wine : sweet youth lacks wisdom, wise old age lacks sweetness of character.”

When Shamba was heir-presumptive to the throne (said the Moaridi, while the elders were listening attentively), he declared to his mother that he wanted to travel and see the world; she tried to dissuade him, and pointed out the many dangers he would have to run in foreign parts. "You will be King when your uncle dies; why risk your life?" Shamba replied: "As the king is the greatest of men, so he ought to be the wisest; by remaining here I shall never learn anything but what the Bushongo know; by travelling amongst foreign people I shall learn to know their virtues and their vices; the virtues that I may emulate them, the vices so that I may nip them in the bud if they arise amongst my people." His mother gave him three faithful slaves, provisions for a few days, and off he went in a westerly direction. He visited the "Pene" (Bapende), the Ambono (Babunda, who call themselves Ambunu), and the Babinji; his sweet nature made him everywhere popular. After several years he came back, and when he ascended the throne he introduced amongst his people the useful things he had learnt abroad. Till then they had clothed themselves with bark-cloth; now they were taught to weave raffia fibre: till then they had only grown maize and millet for their staple food; he taught them to plant cassava, a plant which the locusts could not destroy: he instructed them to play the game of *lela* (*mancala*), a game of skill which put a stop to their passion for gambling. It was he who brought from the Babinji the art of embroidering, and the Bushongo soon surpassed their masters. He encouraged all arts and crafts, so that in his reign they attained their highest



BUSHONGO WOMAN AND GIRL OF THE ISAMBO SUB-TRIBE.

The top of the woman's head is shaved and the hair on the back is left long. The girl's hair is twisted with oil and soot into innumerable balls, richly powdered with red camwood,

development, which is nowhere equalled in Africa. As a man of peace, he abolished war and restricted his forces to police duty. He abolished the use of bows and arrows and of the *shongo* . . .

Here I had to interrupt. What was the *shongo*? I was told it was a terrible weapon, the national arm of the Bushongo. It was like lightning, and it was to its use that their nickname, "Bakuba, the people of the lightning," was due; their real name, Bushongo, did it not mean the people of the *shongo*? Then the King drew in sand a picture of it; I at once recognised it as a throwing-knife (see Fig. 6), a weapon unknown to Bantu people, which had its home far away in the north amongst the people of the Ubangi-Tshad

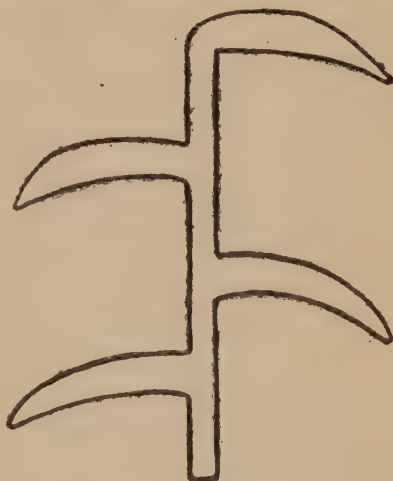


FIG. 6.—SHONGO THROWING-KNIFE,
AS DRAWN BY THE KING.

region! I asked if any had been preserved; no, not in the country, but the forest dwellers to the north had some, and used them as currency. This was a revelation! Not only did it seem to fix the original home of the Bushongo, but it also explained the presence of the *woshele*, the quaint currency I had collected in the Bankutu country, and whose presence there was an enigma to all anthropologists.

Though he hated war (the Moaridi continued) he made the name of Bushongo respected all over the

land, and his subjects travelled freely amongst the neighbouring tribes in pursuit of commerce. Bushongo traders wore no other arm than the leaf-shaped knife of state, and when some savages said : " Let us attack this unarmed stranger," it was enough for them to say : " I am a Mushongo," and they knelt to him, clapped their hands as a token of respect, and said : " He is a subject of the Nyimi, we must honour him." But if it happened that in some distant village, amongst the savages on the banks of the Lukenye, one of his subjects was killed, Shamba would exclaim : " Do those people think, because we are lovers of peace, that we are women ? Nyibita, sound the war-horn ! " And the Bushongo, armed with their swords, went like a swarm of locusts to attack the offenders. They burnt their villages, destroyed their crops, and cut their plantain trees ; but bloodshed was avoided, for Shamba said : " Kill neither man, woman nor child ; are they not the children of Chembe (God), and have they not a right to live ? " Only those who resisted were hurt, and by the strength of their numbers the Bushongo obliged the rest to submit, to pay a fine and give hostages.

He gave orders that even the state knife should be exchanged for one with a wooden blade during moonless nights ; and this custom exists to this day.

But his greatest influence on the nation was by his administrative reforms. He changed the Great Council of the nation and organised it as it is to-day. To honour arts and crafts he allowed every guild to send a representative to the assembly which decided the nation's fate. To commemorate his rule he induced the greatest artist of the country to carve his

image in wood ; and there he is represented peacefully sitting in front of a *lela* board, the most remarkable work of art black Africa ever produced. How this statue found its way into the British Museum will be told later.

The talk of the Moaridi had been listened to by all with deep respect ; as the words fell from his mouth I translated and Simpson took them down. The King, who had told me many times that Shamba was the ideal he wanted to emulate, got excited and spoke passionately to the elders. Why would they not listen to him, why would they not let him walk in the footsteps of his illustrious ancestor ? Shamba had not disdained to learn from the foreigner and to teach his people new things ! Shamba was always a man of peace, he would not have war and killing and burning . . .

A rumour arose in the village and increased like a wave coming towards us. A man came running down the street, one hand high up in the air, the other pressed to his throbbing heart. He thrust the crowd aside and fell down before the King.

“The Bangendi have slain a priest !” he panted, and remained lying at the King’s feet. The features of the Nyimi contracted painfully ; he clasped his hands and bowed his head. None of the grandees moved ; there was no emotion depicted on their faces. To the King, the killing of a white man meant a catastrophe ; to these old men, who had passed their youth in sterner times, it was an incident of little importance, and perhaps they felt some satisfaction at the destruction of one of the invaders. They sat like that for a minute or so, then the King

rose, waved his hand to the messenger to follow him, and, without a word, walked off to his compound. The elders followed his example and dispersed towards their homes. We, too, were apprehensive of the consequences of this murder, and we sat there for a long time silent, idle, smoking hard.

An hour later the King sent Shamba-Shamba to ask me if I could come and see him. I found him very despondent ; all his efforts to keep peace seemed to have failed ; would not the white man think that he had approved of or connived at the crime ? He gave me the story of what had happened, and this was found later on to be fairly correct. A young priest, fresh from Europe, had visited a N'Gendi village ; somehow the poor inexperienced man got nervous and thought the natives had bad intentions towards him ; so, with the intention of frightening them, he fired his revolver into the air ! He did frighten them—the man standing nearest to him killed him on the spot ! The effect of fright depends very much on the person, who is subject to it ; one of the beaux of the capital, if frightened, would have run away ; but the Bangendi are made of other stuff ; anyone frightening them had better make his will first, and remember that there won't be time for a codicil. I advised the Nyimi to send to the Viceroy of the Bangendi country and ask him to arrest the guilty person ; I thought that no harm would come to him if he stood his trial with the State. The Nyimi sent a messenger at once.

We were afterwards shown the statue of Shamba Bolongongo ; I made up my mind that it should go to the British Museum at any cost. There were a

few other statues, and one could see that they were not made by the same artist, nor at the same time. Shamba's was by far the best ; very strong, though certain parts, like the hands, had been roughly done ; if the artist had been a modern one, I should say that this was intentional, so as to fix all the attention on the head. Every chief was represented with some object he greatly cherished in his life : Shamba with a *lela* board ; another chief, a great smith, with his anvil ; another, famous as a dancer, with a drum. The last statue made was that of Mikope Mbula, who reigned in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Having fallen in love with a slave girl, this King abolished the law forbidding the marriage of a free person with a slave, and then married his beloved. His statue, now, I believe, in the Tervueren Museum, represents him with a small woman in front of him : that which he loved best on earth, his slave-wife.

The Nyimi was quite willing to give me the statue of Shamba ; he wanted it to go to a safe place and be seen by people of all nations ; but how could he part with this treasure belonging to the nation ? Of course, if the Great Council consented, that would be another matter ; but the Council was entirely under the influence of the grandees, especially the Kimi Kambu, and he would never allow the King to part with the statue. Yet the King knew that in the Mushenge it might perish any day by fire, or by some unfortunate foreign invasion. We talked about it a long time, and finally we came, at his suggestion, to the following resolution : I would go to the Kimi Kambu and explain to him the advantages of removing the statue to a safe place, i.e. the British Museum, and

then tell him that I had suggested it to the King, who had absolutely refused his consent. This would at once dispose the old man to take the other side. Then I might do the same thing with the other elders.

I acted on this device, and it was a long and weary business. Every single grandee had to be interviewed separately, and even before each such visit somehow disposed to be in my favour. There never was such lavish bribery, so much coaxing, such abject flattery—till the great day came when the elders went to see the King and asked him to allow the statue to be given to me. Up to the last the King played his rôle well, and when he finally assented the old men felt that they had gained a great victory over him. The common people never knew anything about the transaction, and the statue was brought to me in the dark of night by Shamba-Shamba. I was in a hurry to send it off lest the people should change their minds. Nothing could give the reader a better idea of the security of the country than that I dared to send this most valuable object, as I had sent all my previous collections, by carriers recruited amongst unknown villagers, unescorted, to the next place where a steamer would call one day. I have thus sent hundreds of loads, sometimes a fortnight's march overland, sometimes even more, frequently by people recruited in a village, where I had not spent more than twenty-four hours—and not a single one was lost or pilfered!

CHAPTER XIV

SLAVE-RAIDERS—COURT OFFICIALS—A PUNITIVE EXPEDITION

STRANGE rumours were reaching the village from the south ; we were told that a band of slave-raiders had come to the Bakete country.

Impossible ! Of course, I knew these things still happened now and then on the Portuguese frontier, but now we were, I thought, far away from it. However, as I looked at the map I realised that I had forgotten that this frontier is at this longitude much farther north than I had imagined, and that it was less than two hundred miles distant. The villagers were most positive about it ; the slavers were Badjok and formed a strong armed band. I asked them what they knew about the Badjok, and was told that many, many years ago these people had invaded Bushongo and committed terrible ravages in their raids ; they spread such a terror that even to this day it was a common curse to say, "May Chimbundu Moana N'Gala take you," this being the name of the Badjoks' leader.

A few days later we found that it was all true, but that the slavers had been dealt with as they deserved. The young officer in charge of the region, Count Ferdinand de Hemricourt de Grunne, had been apprised of their presence over a month ago, and had

pursued them ever since, but with the connivance of some scoundrelly chiefs they had always managed to escape. At last de Grunne was informed that they were camping on the other bank of the Lulua, but the river seemed an impassable barrier as the slavers had removed all native dug-outs to their side of it, and the Lulua is to such an extent infested by crocodiles that there was no more than one chance in a thousand for a swimmer to get across alive. De Grunne decided that, as someone had to take that one chance, he, as the leader, would do so. He put his men in charge of his native sergeant, and told him that he was going off to reconnoitre ; as soon as he was out of sight he undressed and started on his desperate attempt. By some miracle he succeeded in escaping the crocodiles' jaws, and then he was fortunate enough to find in a creek a ramshackle old dug-out. This he got across with an improvised paddle, and then sent some soldiers over to find more craft ; they fortunately discovered some, and by their means the whole little army of forty was ferried to the other bank. The Badjoks' encampment was surrounded in the darkness of a moonless night, and at dawn the soldiers were closing up on the enemy. A sentinel fired on them, and a desperate battle began ; the Badjok set fire to their encampment, and behind the conflagration maintained a violent fusillade on the soldiers. De Grunne detached half his forces and turned the enemy with them ; taken between two fires the raiders' ranks broke, and they retreated into a neighbouring wood where they put up a vigorous defence. Forty-seven were killed and a great number wounded, but these the gallant scoun-



WAR !

The shout has travelled from village to village and the men are running to arm themselves for the fray.

AN AFFAIR OF STATE.

A high Bushongo dignitary proceeding to a state function executes in the street a *pas seul* for the delectation of the populace.

drels (it would be ridiculous to minimise their courage) carried off in their flight. The Belgian forces had two casualties only; de Grunne's rifle had been smashed in his hands. The leader of the band and nine others were made prisoners, and three hundred barrels of gunpowder, of Portuguese make, were captured. Two hundred slaves, mostly women and children, were liberated; they were found after the battle attached by chains to stakes; some of the miserable women were carrying babies in their arms. I think I can pay no higher tribute to the gallant rescuer than by mentioning that in his report he stated that "someone" crossed the dangerous river; my information that he himself did so was derived from his soldiers who had been present, and has been confirmed by several independent native witnesses.

I am at liberty to write about these events because I can no longer offend de Grunne's modesty. A few years later he was making another rush to get at grips with invaders: his own country, Belgium, had been overrun and he was hastening home to take his part in her liberation. It was not to be: on his way he succumbed to illness and found a grave in the colony which he had served so well.

The messenger the King had sent to the Bangendi had been badly received, and the Viceroy had used threatening language. The Nyimi informed de Grunne and asked for instructions; then he convoked the General Assembly to discuss matters.

The meeting took place on the open ground where the dance had been held; all the representatives were present. The King had lent me Shamba-Shamba to

give me any information I might require; this I checked later with other people and, if necessary, rectified. Naturally, in the course of years, some of the



FIG. 7.

EMBLEM OF THE
HERALD'S
OFFICE.

original functions of the representatives forming the Great Council had been forgotten, and they were now known by those functions only which they performed at court ceremonies. Most of these were as obsolete as the dignity of the hereditary champion of the King is in England.

The King sat again on a dais, surrounded by his six male and two female ministers. Next to him, on a seat higher than his, sat his mother. When he arrived it was she who first addressed him, showing that her position was considered as even more exalted than the King's, who must always show her the greatest deference. Next to the Nyimi, but lower, sat the Buimbi, the presumptive heir to the throne, then the two Chwala, the nearest in the line of succession. In front of the King were the Bambi and Bengi, the royal heralds, They wore bells like the Nyibita, and in addition each had in his hand a staff representing four assagais carved out of one piece of wood, and reminding one of the Roman lictor's *fasces* (Fig. 7). Behind them sat three assistant heralds. Near by was the Moaridi, the official historian of the tribe; he must be the son of a king and takes precedence over all royal descendants. His duty is the preservation of the ancient

legends and the teaching of the country's history. By his side was the Mene Molomo, his second. Amongst the courtiers, those who deserve special mention were : the Bimbi, to whom people go when they are ill and want the king to use his influence with the ancestors to cure them ; the Kengete, the guardian of the king's gates ; the Yulu N'Kongo, who, with two assistants, is the guardian of the king's children ; the king's cup-bearer, the ringer of the king's bell, the Ibole Bana who runs in front of the king to clear the way, the guardian of the king's sacred bird, the crested eagle ; the king's musicians, the guardians of the king's harem, the king's carpet-spreader, the *grand-veneur*, the master of the chase, the Pasiri Moyeshe, who was entitled to receive the thank-offerings of those who had become the happy fathers of twins ; the chief of public works, the Moyeshe, the town crier of the capital (only a twin could occupy this position), and quite a number of others. The headman of the king's slaves, the chief of his guards and the man on whose leg the king's foot rested were slaves ; still, they had as much to say as any other representative.

Near the Ma na Nyimi, the King's mother, sat the female elders : the King's first wife, the chief of his harem, the Yumi who inflicted punishment on disobedient women, the chief singer, etc., thirteen in all. One of them, the representative of the village wives, wore her hair in man's fashion, the only woman entitled to do so.

Besides the grandees who had judicial functions there were twelve judges, including the Banga, "president of the divorce court," a jolly old fellow who, like a well-known colleague of his in England, did

not disdain to make his audience laugh ; but he obtained his humorous effects by quite different means : namely, by contracting his rather prominent abdomen into folds resembling human features ! The head of the police and his two assistants may be mentioned in this category.

Besides the Nyibita and his second in command there were three other military officers ; one of them, the Sese Yulu, looked like the savage replica of a drum-major. Four treasury officers included one who received the funeral taxes, and one who saw to it that the families of suicides paid a fine.

But the most interesting of all were the representative councillors. As has been mentioned, four of the ministers represented each a province ; the six home rule ministers of the Bambala, the province of the Nyimi's clan, bearing similar titles to the ministers of the realm, represented this part of the kingdom ; the Bakete had two ; the Pianga, the Bangendi, etc., and the pygmies one each. These latter acted also as agents-general for their tribe, dealt with the central government in their name and presented to the King any fellow-tribesmen who came to the capital.

Then came the representatives of the various trades : their doyen, the representative of the carvers, ranks first, followed by the delegate of the smiths ; the latter, though a commoner, wears the hatpin of brass which is the privilege of members of the royal family. Then there were representatives of the following trades : bonnet-makers, weavers, cordwainers, singers, musicians, dancers, salt makers, fishermen, hunters, oil makers, mat makers, net makers, tailors, and cord makers. And then there was the Nyibilumbu, this

very quaint personage who represented the fathers of twins !

How are these people selected ? It took me some time to find out, and the process is so different from our elections that it is a difficult task to make it clear to Europeans. In theory it is the King who nominates them ; in reality he has no more power in this business than the Archbishop of Canterbury. Nor is there a ballot ; when it is the question of representing a guild, it is the guild itself which decides, and there is no doubt that it is the cleverest craftsmen on whom the choice falls. For all the others it is public opinion which carries the day. How does it express itself ? It is very difficult to say, yet it is very pronounced. During our stay the Bambi died ; the King was longing to make his best friend and brother-in-law, Shamba-Shamba, his successor ; he intrigued, his friends canvassed—and in the end *vox populi* chose another man, a man who belonged to the Kimi Kambu's party and who would oppose the King in everything. He complained bitterly to me about it, but declared himself absolutely helpless against the will of the people.

During his lifetime the defunct Bambi had been, I have no doubt, a very pleasant fellow, but dead he was very objectionable. He was exposed in a coffin of mats for a number of days, watched day and night by his wife and female relatives. It decidedly eased the atmosphere when he was committed to the ground. A funeral dance took place the same evening, and all the elders turned up to it in their best finery. Their skirts were of rich embroidered cloth, and in their bonnets they wore huge bunches of gaily coloured feathers. Grass, or herbs, were twisted like cords

round their necks. The men had buffaloes' tails in their left hand and with the right they brandished their swords; the whole ceremony resembled a rhythmical fight. The next morning the Bambi's successor "kissed hands" on his appointment. After performing a mock attack, the dignitary made a speech and knelt down on one knee before the King, who then raised him. Poor Nyimi! How humiliating it must have been for him to receive the homage of the man who had been forced on him!

It was now confirmed that the Bangendi were in open rebellion, and it was decided that the King should go with his men to chastise them and force them to give up the man who slew the priest. There was great excitement in the village; the Sese Yulu strutted about with two feathers of the crested eagle in the corners of his mouth, and carried a lance about ten feet long. The young warriors sharpened their swords and renewed the strings of their bows. Then one morning the army marched out. The King was carried in a box-like litter surrounded by his staff, and after him followed the warriors. What a poor show they made compared with the martial Bangendi whom I had visited a few months ago! But they boasted of great courage and threatened the Bangendi with utter destruction. Not one of them would survive! If words could kill there was, no doubt, a great defeat in store for them. The little boys yelled with joy at the martial display, and, armed with maize stalks and toy bows, performed prodigies of valour.

Hilton Simpson and I followed the army for awhile, full of misgivings as to the results of the expedition. Our only hope, which proved to be justified, was that

de Grunne would come up in time and support the loyal forces.

As we came back we saw on the roadside an old blind man playing on a guitar and humming a melody softly to himself. This was the former Nyibita, or commander-in-chief, now retired, and the song he sang was a song of love.

For the next few days we lived on rumours and scarcely anything else. Whilst the King had been with us he saw to it that we were regularly supplied with food ; he being gone, we were left to our own devices, and now we discovered how poor the country really was. Nothing was to be got, no fowls nor eggs, and we lived on cassava flour seasoned with palm oil. Every now and then a messenger would come with some startling news : the King had called out the Bangongo who had risen to a man. An hour later we were told that the same Bangongo had joined the rebels ; then again that they had remained neutral. After a few days news of battles reached us : hundreds of Bangendi had been slain and the Sese Yulu had with his own hands cut off the head of the leader of their army. Then came rumours of lost battles and defeat ; the loyal forces had suffered terribly. At last one day the first ambulance arrived : bringing one man shot in the abdomen. We did the best for the poor fellow, but he died. And the rumours continued.

At last the army returned with much shouting and yelling, announcing victory. There was great joy, and we were pleased to see the Nyimi safely back. But in the evening, when every one in the village had retired, the King came and told us the real tale. A few Bangendi had been killed, the losses of his own forces

amounted to—one ! But the rebels had not submitted, their leader was at large, and only the advent of de Grunne had saved the loyalists from defeat. The next day the Great Council was to meet and the King had to explain—a bitter pill to swallow. Poor Nyimi !

CHAPTER XV

THE RUSHONGO AND THEIR THROWING-KNIFE

THE General Council's meeting went off better than I had expected. It is true the Kimi Kambu, ostentatiously respectful, spoke some very cruel words to the King concerning public affairs in general, and the late war in particular, but the majority of the elders received these coolly and seemed pleased that peace had been made.

As the Kimi Kambu left the Assembly I joined him and tried to soften his heart towards the King. Though years had bent his shoulders, the old man stood a good head taller than I ; now he leant forward and looked straight into my eyes : " Mingenja," he said, " you think that I am one of those who always want to kill the cuckoo, the cock and the weaverbird (a Bushongo saying for a very quarrelsome person : these three birds announce in succession the coming day) ; you are mistaken. I am old and want peace and rest ; but I want such a peace as is given to the elephant who does not want to hurt anyone, but whom nobody dares to hurt ; I have no use for the peace of the worm who cannot hurt anyone and nobody thinks worth hurting. I want rest, but how can I have rest when I see my country perishing ? While I live I must try to avert its doom. Where is the King's authority ? The Bangendi

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defy it with impunity. Where is the valour of our young men? They show it when facing the fleshpot and the cup. What becomes of our art? People disdain the cloth we make and crave for foreign goods. What about our morals? Young men who ought to be fully initiated have not yet passed the first tests. Even our old language is forgotten, and besides myself there are not twenty men who understand it. . . .”

Our old language! So there was an ancient language, and the Kimi Kambu knew it! I felt so elated with this information that if the old man had asked me then and there to marry his daughter—or his grandmother, for all I cared—I would have clinched the bargain on the spot. There are periods in one’s life when everything fails; there are others when everything succeeds, and the present seemed to be one of my lucky moments. I had struck a rich field for research and collecting in Bushongo, and the whole country overwhelmed me with kindness; the King was sympathetic and helpful; I had obtained Shamba’s statue; through the eclipse I had been able to fix a date in the country’s history; the discovery of the throwing-knife confirmed what Woto’s legends had led me to suspect—and now an ancient language was perhaps going to reveal if I were right in my surmises or not. What more could I ask for?

This was the last link; if this, too, indicated the southern edge of the Sahara as the ancestral home of the Bushongo, as the other signs did, my theory became a certitude. Though it did not take me long to collect a small vocabulary, a very small one, because since the death of Bope Mobinji the old language had fallen in abeyance, it was months before I could

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get the expert opinion which would enable me to draw my conclusions. I wrote at once to my friend Sir Harry Johnston; the liberty I always took in appealing for help to my friends, or sometimes to people whom I did not know personally, was only surpassed by the generosity with which they responded to my appeal. In due time Sir Harry told me that this old language, which the Bushongo called Lumbila, did not belong to the Bantu family, and was akin to those spoken near Lake Tchad.

I had now at my disposal the following data: first, the legends: the Bushongo came from far, far in the north, beyond the great forest; travelling for a long time they crossed four great rivers. Secondly, their principal weapon was the *shongo*, the throwing-knife, a weapon used by the Azande and kindred peoples living in the Ubangi-Tchad region. Thirdly, the big river flowing into Lake Tchad is called Shari, and it is quite usual with emigrating people to take with them the names of the principal geographical features of their ancient home, and to bestow them on similar ones in the place where they settled. The three principal rivers, where the Bushongo and their kinsmen settled, are the Sankuru, the Kasai and the Loange: the Bushongo call the Sankuru, Chale, which must be the same as Shari, as the Bantu cannot pronounce the *r*, and substitute the letter *l* for it; the Bashilele call the Kasai, Jari Bumpuru (here the *r* is preserved), which means the Black Shari; and the Bakongo call the Loange, Jari Babara, which means the Red Shari. Surely, this is more than coincidence! And now comes the language to crown it all: it is called Lumbila, and the paramount tribe of the Bushongo call them-

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selves Bambala ; both words have the same origin : the people who speak a language called Lumbila (*lu* is a prefix denoting a language) must at one time of their history have been called the Abila, or, with the northern pronunciation, the Abira ; Bambala is simply the Bantu form of the word. The kinship of the Bushongo and the Azande is, to my mind, established beyond doubt. There are many other less important things that point in this direction ; I may mention the appliance for divination, called Itombwa by the Bushongo, which is described in Chapter IX, page 109 ; the Azande have a similar instrument and it is called Ewa. Woto, the name which plays such an important part in Bushongo mythology, is to this day used amongst the Azande aristocracy ; Yapati, the hero king of the Ambomu, was originally called Wote. The Bantu generally name their clans after the founder ; the Azande never bestow more than a nickname on them ; so do the Bushongo.

Why did the Abira leave their home ? For the same reason which induced the Azande to migrate, in the distant past as well as within historical times ; the encroachment of the Sahara from the north may have exerted an indirect pressure by causing the advance of fair-skinned people southwards. In connection with this we must bear in mind that both the Bambala and the Bangongo make their first king a white man. There is also the possibility of famine, indicated by the legend which makes Woto kill all the fowls and makes the millet rot. Finally, the dissensions of relations, which in the case of the Abira are said to have been caused by an act of incest.

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The first band that started under the leadership of Nyimi Lele must have been a small one, and its success in cutting its way through many hostile and powerful tribes must be attributed to that terrible weapon, the *shongo*, the throwing-knife. We can imagine them fighting, as their kinsmen in the north fight to this day: the main body of archers in the centre, flanked by spearmen; on their shields hang the *shongo*. The first attack is made with arrows, but their small numbers cannot make an impression on the overwhelming masses of the enemy; then all of a sudden, some objects, glittering in the sun as if they were thunderbolts, come whirling with a weird hum through the air. The enemy warriors raise their shields; the shining mystery strikes it, rebounds into the air and returns to the attack; it smites the warrior behind his defence with its cruel blades. A weapon which is capable of killing behind a shield cannot fail to cause a panic; resistance breaks down and the Abira pass over the foe.

Thus they fought their way to the forest, where the occasional appearance of its little folk inspired them with superstitious awe, and made them believe that the pygmies were the children of the trees. The forest offered the Abira no attraction, and when they reached the banks of the Kasai, just below its confluence with the Sankuru, they looked longingly towards the open land beyond. Did they cross on rafts, or did they enlist the help of the Basongo men by means fair or foul?—we do not know; but, somehow, they got over this fourth great river as they got across the Ubangi, the Congo and the Bussira; and now, hugging the banks of the “Black Shari,”

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they spread south and subdued the aborigines. This progress was probably not accomplished at once, but in stages as the tribe increased in numbers and in power.

The second group, under Woto, soon followed and reaped the fruits of its precursor's valour; its progress met with less opposition; besides, Woto, the chief, had naturally many more followers than his unfortunate son. They crossed the Kasai at about the same place as the Bashilele, and, finding the banks of that river occupied by their kinsmen, proceeded west until they struck the "Red Shari," where they settled.

One generation intervened between the second and the third migration; whatever may have been the cause of the two previous ones, it was not the sentimental love and respect for the lost uncle that induced the chief of the Abira to follow him, and we may now assume that it was famine which was the motive power. The main part of the Abira seems to have drifted slightly farther east than the previous bands, and Minga Bengela's people crossed the San-kuru instead of the Kasai; south of this river they conquered vaster territories, and acquired from their new subjects and neighbours the name of Bakuba, the people of the thunderbolt, while they themselves gave their new home the name of "the land of the Shongo"—Bushongo, in recognition of the fact that it was to the use of this weapon that they owed their conquest of it.

Who were the vanquished, and what happened to them? A glance at the ethnographical map of Central Africa shows that the Bushongo form a wedge driven into a solid mass of people who, by whatever name

they may go, belong to the Luba family. If this were not indication enough, and if it were not confirmed by a considerable number of ethnographical facts, several of which are mentioned in the pages of this book, we might accept in this case the language test. It is obvious that many of the conquerors, we may assume the majority, married women of the conquered people, because in the case of distant migrations the women naturally suffer more than the men; these Baluba women taught their children their own language, Chiluba, first, and in the course of a few generations Lumbila became the monopoly of a few full-blooded aristocratic families, and finally disappeared. Though by this constant intermarriage the Bushongo have, in course of time, become practically of the same blood as the Baluba (we may perhaps ascribe a greater purity to the Bambala, the tribe of the royal family), the Luba language they speak has lost much of its purity, and contains words and word-formations painful to the ears of the philologist; Bushongo, as a name for the people, contracted from Bashi-Bushongo (the people of Shongo-land), ought to be Bashongo, and pure Bantu would call the *Mushenge*, *Mishenge*, etc. But their physical type, the purest aristocrats excepted, is similar to the Baluba, and they have inherited that people's love for agriculture. Though they have brought them to a much greater perfection than the Baluba, their form of government by councils of elders, and their principal art, wood-carving, have been inherited from that people. The matriarchal system of succession, the organisation of their clans, and consequent exogamy are all shaped on the Bantu pattern.

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The Baluba themselves were, however, not the aborigines of the country; it is generally accepted that in a remote past the whole of the Central Congo basin, which includes the Kasai and Sankuru, was an integral part of the great forest and peopled by a few pygmies only. At that time the Baluba lived at a great distance to the east in the region of the Great Lakes, and it was under pressure from the pastoral Hamitic peoples, who penetrated irresistibly farther and farther into the heart of the continent in search of new grazing ground for their cattle, that many of them were enslaved, and those who showed more spirit of independence were defeated and driven into the wilderness. The Baluba are essentially agriculturists, and in their progress, by constantly clearing ground for their cultivations (a process still going on), they destroyed the forest and made room for the grassland which is now prevalent in this region. And had the pygmies, so jealous of their independence, nothing to say in the matter? They came most likely to a working arrangement with the invaders, supplying them with the spoils of the chase in exchange for agricultural produce which they were unable or unwilling to raise. There may have been a further inducement to tolerate the intruders: it is probable that this migration took place after the neolithic period in Africa, and that the Baluba were able to supply the little men of the forest with iron—an inestimable boon. The fact that many neolithic implements and workshops are found in the Lake district, while they are practically absent in the Kasai district must, however, be accepted as a conditional proof only, as very little systematic research has been



MOTHERHOOD.

1. and 2. Motherhood is greatly honoured amongst the Bantu negroes. Bangongo women, when expecting their firstborn are entitled to dress their hair like the chief's, in the shape of buffalo horns. 3. Miko Mikope has had his belt cut and soon will have to go to bed to be nursed by his friends till his wife is delivered. 4. This Luba woman's headdress, consisting of cane entwined with hair, indicates that her child has cut its' first teeth.

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made till now in this direction. The Baluba and the pygmies seem to have tacitly accepted the Sankuru as the limit of the former's progress. The Bushongo of to-day are naturally a very different people from those of the past ; two great events in their history must have altered them almost beyond recognition. One was the reign of Shamba, with its far-reaching reforms, the other the advent of the white man. Besides, before Shamba's time, there had been a further admixture of foreign elements. The Batetela had begun to move far away east, and were conquering land from the Bankutu ; the latter were forced westwards, and pressed on the Basongo Meno ; these crossed the Sankuru, and asked for asylum amongst the Bushongo. It must be clearly borne in mind that the Congo basin is very sparsely populated ; taking the population of the Congo Free State at the highest estimation, it is less than twenty to the square mile, and I believe that half that number would be nearer a true estimation. There was plenty of room for the new-comers ; their chiefs and aristocrats married Bushongo women, the few Bushongo in the province wedded daughters of the immigrants ; their descendants formed at first a privileged class, no doubt, but have since merged into the rest of the people. Thus the Bangongo, Bangendi, and Isambo became part of the nation, and later on the Bashoba followed their example.

It was in consequence of these reflections that I made up my mind to visit the country of the Bakongo and the Bashilele, who, as the descendants of Woto's and Nyimi Lele's followers, were a living record of what the Bushongo were like at the be-

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ginning of the seventeenth century, before Shamba's far-reaching cultural and political reforms. I mentioned the matter to Hilton Simpson, and told him that we had a good chance of having our throats cut in the adventure, but he declared that that was an eventuality which he would not take into account. I spoke about it to the Nyimi, and he was kind enough to tell me that he thought I would get on even with these people, though they were notoriously hostile to foreigners, and had never yet tolerated the white man amongst themselves. I asked for an introduction; unfortunately, he had no intercourse with them. I then suggested that one of his men should come with me, but there again he could give me no satisfaction: his subjects disliked leaving their own country. I knew this to be true to such an extent that even men under a heavy sentence, or to be taken for trial to the State authorities, were never kept under guard: the idea that they might forsake Bushongo and flee to a neighbouring tribe never occurred to them.

Meanwhile, we were pretty busy collecting and inquiring into the rest of the people's history. Shamba was succeeded by Bongo Lenge, under whom decline began. The Isambo revolted and tore themselves from the Empire. On the other hand, one of the sons of the King, viceroy among the Pianga, killed his mother in a moment of folly, and when he recovered his senses left the country with his followers; he, it is believed, was the mysterious hunter Ihunga, who founded the Lunda empire.

Under his successor, Bom Bosh, the Bashoba crossed the Sankuru and joined the Empire. Shortly afterwards they were followed by a host of Bankutu,

forest cannibals, who, hiding in the thickets by day, emerged at night and killed men, women and children. Bom Bosh was asked by his harassed subjects to come to the rescue and defend them against these people who, "instead of fighting like men in the light of the day, attacked them at night like ghosts." Bom Bosh thought of a ruse which would induce them to give battle in daytime. He concerted with one of the Bashoba chiefs, and told him that he, this chief, should pretend to side with the Bankutu and persuade them to attack the capital in daytime; during the battle, the Bashoba were to pass over to the King, and the enemy taken between two forces would be easily annihilated. The ruse succeeded, and when the captured Bankutu were brought before the King, he asked them: "Why did you attack us? You have killed innumerable men, women and children; don't you deserve death?"

The chief answered that his young warriors had thirsted for glory, so he led them to war. "What, you have killed people out of sheer vanity? You shall die!" exclaimed Bom Bosh, and all were slain. Bom Bosh was followed by Bo Kama Bomanchala of eclipse fame. Then after seven other kings came Koto Che, to whom his southern subjects came to complain that a Luba king had attacked them; he went with an army to their assistance. The two forces engaged in battle with much slaughter, when a warrior called Masakana came to King Koto Che and asked him to withdraw his forces as he wished to fight the whole army of the Baluba single-handed. This was granted, and Masakana fell on the foe. One Muluba fell killed by his right hand, another by his

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left, and he continued fighting with such heroism that soon the soil was littered with the corpses of hundreds of Baluba. Those who asked for mercy he took by the waist and threw over his head to the admiring Bushongo. After this the Baluba submitted, and became faithful subjects of the Nyimi. Again there followed three uneventful reigns, then Mikope Mbula became King. It was he who fell in love with a slave girl, and who abolished the prohibition which forbade any union between a free person and a slave in order that he might marry her. He was so happy with his slave wife that he lived and ruled a very great number of years.

His successor was Bope Mobinji, who was still ruling, though blind with age, when Dr. Wolf came to the country. He had a hundred sons, of whom the present Kimi Kambu is one; these sons formed his bodyguard, and whenever anyone committed an offence against the king, or his orders, the sons would attack his village, kill him, plunder the place and take his women-folk and children into slavery. His severity provoked several revolts, which were suppressed with great cruelty. When he heard that his son had permitted Dr. Wolf to visit a Bushongo village on the frontier, he had a slave killed on the spot so as to expiate the pollution.

CHAPTER XVI

COUVADE—RUMOURS OF WAR—HUMAN SACRIFICE—
ACCESSION OF A KING—COURT FUNCTIONS

THE King had sent messengers into the outlying parts of the realm to tell people that if they had old things to sell, now was the time to get a good price ; there was a fool in the place who had given ten shillings for an old broken cup, though the seller asked only sixpence, hoping to get two ; and he had said that for another one like it he would give a pound. These were not the exact words, but such was the meaning of the message. That day the Nyimi himself came and brought with him two Bakono (countrymen) who had something to sell : the remains of an old drum, about half of it, beautifully ornamented with images of the sun entwined by graceful loops ; it is in the British Museum, and can be seen in the ethnographical gallery (Case R). Some children were idling about the place and, as a great favour, were given our (unloaded) guns and rifles to play at soldiers. They had made themselves beards with the hairy stuff surrounding green corn, and pretended to be white men. From the village came the constant “ thud, thud ” of the women pounding flour in their wooden mortars. From behind a wall a pretty girl looked maliciously at Miko-Mikope, a very handsome young man, who

sat in front of his house smoking and tried hard to look unconcerned. It was no good, every one knew, and the pretty girl knew, that he was as good as a prisoner ; his wife was expecting a baby, and, in accordance with the custom of the country, she had cut his belt ; if he rose, his clothes would fall off, and—oh horror !—at any moment he might be called, not to the bed of his wife, but—to go to bed himself, and be nursed till the trouble was over. That is why the girl was grinning so maliciously.

Some women, with their hoes over their shoulders, were coming from the fields, and the Nyibita, Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief of the Kingdom, passed, swinging gently on a string two calabashes filled with the delicious sap of the palm. Then a man clad in breeches came strolling down the street ; over his shoulders was a stick with a paper in its split end : a letter ! When he saw me he began to run, imagining that I would believe he had done so the whole way. The letter was from Count de Grunne, and was as follows :

“ I beg to inform you, that the Reverend Mr. Morison has written to me and advised me that the Lukengo and the Bakuba are preparing a general revolt. As you are on the spot you would oblige me greatly by informing me as quickly as possible what you think of this news, so that I may take at once all necessary precautions.

“ I am, etc.”

Lukengo is the title given to the King by the Baluba, and Bakuba is in the same language the equivalent of Bushongo. I handed the letter to Hilton Simpson

and looked round. There was the King, unarmed, and just a minute ago he had been discussing with me the probable age of the broken drum; our armament, two guns and two rifles, were the playthings of the children; the Minister of War was probably doing his best to get drunk as soon as possible . . . and, under all this apparent peace the Reverend Mr. Morison, who lived more than a hundred miles away, had discovered, with his eagle eye, the smouldering fires of revolt!

Simpson read the letter, and condensed his comment into one word, not polite, but emphatic. He, too, looked at the Nyimi; then he tried to bite the end of his pipe off. Having failed in the attempt, he repeated the rude word. The Nyimi was meanwhile interested in a fight which took place between Bope, his little son, and Mikope, the five years' old "terror of the Mushenge," in which his son was getting decidedly the worst. When Bope had been thoroughly licked, his father patted him on the head with one hand; the other was stroking Mikope's cheek.

I answered De Grunne's letter, and told him that there was not the shadow of truth in the report, and that it was just an incident of the campaign of calumny which had been carried on for years against the Nyimi. I called his attention at the same time to the interesting fact that, though the messenger who had taken the reverend gentleman's letter to him must have passed through or near the Mushenge, the sender had not thought it necessary to inform me or Hilton Simpson of the impending danger. Finally, I declared that I was safer where I was than I could be in any European capital.

Of course, there was no ferment in the country, and the accusation against the Nyimi was just a vile calumny. It was no more true than the allegation made by the same people, a short time ago, that at his sister's funeral the Nyimi had had I do not know how many people sacrificed and buried with her. At my suggestion the King offered to have the grave opened in the presence of the authorities—that ended the matter.

It was not long ago that human sacrifices were regularly made at royal funerals ; but, even then, the King had nothing to do with them, as the shedding of blood is against his royal dignity. The person who was responsible for it was the son of the deceased. When the Abira abandoned the patriarchal form of succession to substitute for it the matriarchal, i.e. Bantu form, there survived this much of the old order of things : during the interregnum between the death of a king and the coronation of his successor, the eldest son of the dead monarch held absolute sway over the country. It was he who chose the victims who were to be slain on his father's grave, and personal animosity as well as political antagonism played an important part in his selection. To flatter the new king, on whose goodwill his position in the future depended, he did not neglect to use the opportunity of ridding him of such people, who might become dangerous to his throne ; on the other hand, his personal enemies were not forgotten. He alone knew who would be the future king, for it was through his mouth that his father's last will was proclaimed. Though the succession was restricted to the direct descendants in the female line of the founder, the



A GREAT DANCE AT MISUMBA.

Attended by thousands of people. Women of the same village, wear skirts of the same colour and form distinct groups.

ELDERS DANCING.

They are attired in all their finery and are executing one of their dramatic dances.

king had a right to choose amongst them, and to pass over the nearest relative. It was, however, the exception, and not the rule, that his claims should be disregarded.

When the king felt that his last hour was approaching, he called this eldest son and informed him of all secrets of state, and the choice of his successor. As soon as he had passed away, the government of the country was, for the time being, in the hands of this son; one of his principal duties was to guard the royal treasures, and another to choose the victims to be immolated on his father's grave. Then followed a perfect reign of terror, a hunt for those who were to die. This lasted during the three days the body remained exposed; meanwhile, the population of the country hurried towards the capital to look at the king's face for the last time, and to be present at his obsequies. At Bope Mobinji's funeral, his grave was said to have been lined with two thousand victims—very probably an exaggeration.

After the funeral, the son summons the General Council, and addresses the chief heralds as follows:

"I speak the words my father has spoken to me before he died. This is his will. He orders that So-and-so shall be his successor. Go you, Bambi and Bengi, and bring him the news."

Followed by a constantly increasing crowd, the two heralds go to the dwelling of the Nyimi-elect. When they have arrived, the Bambi says to him: "Up to now you have been an ordinary man, to-day you have become the great Nyimi; you shall lack nothing your heart may desire, you have been chosen to be our lord." The Bengi repeats the same words.

The new king withdraws, and with the help of certain elders assumes his coronation robe, which must be of immaculate white. Meanwhile, the crowd pours into the capital, and all the pygmies living in the kingdom come to act as bodyguards of the king : this indispensable presence of the aborigines is highly significant. On the third day all the people dress in their richest finery, and the Nyimi shows himself to his subjects. The Bambi then asks him, "Are you the Nyimi?" and the Bengi repeats the question, as he repeats everything the Bambi says. After an affirmative answer, they ask, "Tell me the names of those who have been Nyimi before you," and the Nyimi has to recite the names of all his predecessors in due order, from the very beginning of things : all the elders watch that none should be omitted. "Show me now," say the two heralds one after the other, "those who will be Nyimi after you." Then all those who are in the direct female line of descent, even babies in arms, advance dressed in white. Then the heralds say, "Show me who will share the honours with you," and the wives and children of the Nyimi advance, also clad in white. Now the heralds proclaim, "You are the Nyimi and we shall love and honour you. If we slay an animal, it shall be for you ; if we capture a fish, it shall be for you ; if we beget daughters, they shall be for you ; we shall pay you tribute, and any wish your lips may express shall be satisfied. If we obey you, be good to us ; if we disobey, chastise us, for you are the Nyimi, and all power is yours." Then a square box, suspended on two poles, is brought, and the Nyimi enters the litter and perambulates the village, the people fighting for the honour of carrying him.

When the Nyimi has arrived at the capital of his predecessor, he collects all his treasures and has them taken to the place which he has chosen for his new residence (Mushenge). All who are able now help to build his new town; the king's own house is constructed and decorated exclusively by elders, "and there he lives and reigns as a great king—at least, it used to be so in the past," the Nyimi added with a sigh.

The succession of the minor chiefs is similarly in the female line; but it must be confirmed by the king, who bestows an eagle's feather on the new dignitary. Each new Nyimi invents a new design for his drums, and this is to some extent his royal seal.

The elders, once nominated, with the exception of the Commander-in-chief (and possibly the other military leaders; but this has not been ascertained), are irremovable; when the king has been thwarted, as in the case of Shamba-Shamba, in his choice, he may allow his favourite to wear the insignia of the rank without actually possessing it, for in Bushongo stars and garters are worn by every one who is anybody. The various insignia of the grandees have already been mentioned. All men of the ruling tribe, the Bambala, wear the bonnet; in the other tribes these are reserved for the elders. The royal heralds have caps of a special shape, so has the Commander-in-chief. The bonnets are kept in place by a pin about eight inches long (Fig. 8); only members of the royal family



FIG. 8.

AN IRON
BONNET PIN.

and the representative of the smiths are allowed to have these pins made of brass. The pins are ornamented on one end by a miniature bell ; elders wear two hair pins, and the little bell is affixed by a ring of brass ; their staff, about five feet long, is ornamented with a ring of iron, and they alone are allowed to wear a skin hanging behind from the belt, though on festive occasions like the big dances this is tolerated for ordinary people. Women and children of royal blood have the privilege of wearing iron anklets and of ornamenting their dress with cowrie shells. Court dignitaries, attached to the sovereign's person, wear a big shell, or the wooden imitation of one, suspended from their girdle. Until quite recently no one was permitted to wear cloth of European make, or to possess any brass ; this metal was reserved for the King. Swishes, made of the buffalo's tail, are restricted under ordinary circumstances to some of the highest dignitaries.

A certain licence in dress is given on great occasions like festivities, but on the whole there is little use made of it in the capital. The Mushenge is essentially the royal residence, and consequently traditions are more carefully preserved there than in the provinces ; the dances resemble court functions, and those who are present are most punctilious as to their attire. People put in an appearance as part of their duty, and it is smart to be *blasé*. There is none of this in a place like Misumba, where people dance because they like dancing. We have seen there a festive gathering to which people flocked by the thousand, and everybody donned any fineries he might possess. It seems that the costumes of the ladies depend on the villages they belong to, and, as

the groups arrived, we noticed that one was all red, another all white, etc. The ladies' dancing-dresses are simple compared with those of the men. They consist of a long piece of cloth on which certain patterns, always the same, are marked in *appliqué*. The upper edge of the cloth is stiffened with cane, and, when put round the waist, shapes itself in waves. The men alone use the cloth embroidered with elaborate figures, forming a velvety relief. Light and dark red, yellow, black and mauve are the usual colours, the edges are ornamented with tassels and fringes. Since the introduction of Manchester goods a sort of patchwork skirt is frequently worn; this seems to be the revival of a very ancient fashion, as similar skirts made of bark-cloth have been found in considerable numbers. When it rains, a special cloth, very tightly woven, is thrown over the head, and seems to be very nearly waterproof. People in mourning revert to the old bark-cloth which was in daily use before the reign of Shamba. Ladies of the royal family, when they have been bereft of a relation, paint themselves with red and yellow stripes, which gives them a rather comical appearance.

CHAPTER XVII

A PLOT FOILED—THE NKANDA, OR LAW INITIATION CEREMONIES—A SECRET SOCIETY

ONE evening I was going to bed and had nearly undressed, when Shamba-Shamba came to my tent and asked me if the King could speak to me secretly. I quickly put on some clothes, and called Simpson. Soon the King arrived; he looked worried and worn out; I gave him a glass of sherry (we had a bottle with us in case of emergency), which seemed to pick him up a bit. He told me he was in great trouble, and hoped I might help him out of it. Some years ago, before he became King, there had been a terrible epidemic in Bushongo, which killed off people by the thousand; several kings died within a few months. At last an appeal for help had been sent to Zappo Zap, a Luba chief famous for his magic, and he sent some fetishes, the first ever seen in Bushongo, to ward off the evil; shortly afterwards the illness abated. In consequence of this, Zappo Zap had acquired a great reputation amongst the people, which he fostered by constantly sending emissaries to Bushongo, who carried on an active propaganda in his favour. Several of these had just arrived in the capital and were urging the Bushongo to rise against the white man; Zappo not only promised them

support, but boasted that by his influence he would provoke similar risings amongst the other tribes, and an end would be put to the white man's rule. The Nyimi had spoken warmly against any such attempt, and had ordered Zappo's men out of the Mushenge. But before leaving they had managed to talk to many people, and had painted the outlook in such bright colours that some had been convinced and consequently became apostles of this policy. The King had convoked the General Council for the next day, and now he asked me to speak there and strengthen his hand. He thought that I had great influence, not only with the people and his friends, but also with the elders opposed to him, and especially with the grandees. Somehow they had come to the conclusion that I meant well and trusted me.

Of course, I could not refuse, but I did not appreciate the task. I had never spoken in public, and now I was to do so to an assembly whose decided opinions I was expected to oppose; naturally I had to use their language and the figures of speech with which they were familiar. When he had my promise to do what he had asked, the Nyimi, visibly relieved, left us.

Sir Francis Galton once told me that nothing was so helpful to people who were about to make their maiden speech as to put on the very best clothes they possessed; he said a new, smart suit gave everybody a certain amount of confidence. Acting on this advice I not only put on a white suit instead of the usual khaki one, but I even sported a collar and a tie! Hilton Simpson would have been very smart too if he had had soles to his boots; but he had patched

them most elegantly with a piece of hide. We carefully avoided making a solemn entry by coming very early; we had, however, not long to wait before the King appeared and took his usual seat. A few formalities had to be gone through before the debate began. The King made an opening speech, explained why he had called the assembly, and then told the elders that I had known Zappo Zap for years and might be able to tell them what sort of person he was. I got up, and as I looked at the Kimi Kambu he gave me an encouraging nod, and made as near an approach to a smile as he could. That did the trick; I had been frightfully nervous about the business, but the kindly reception of the old Prime Minister restored my courage. I told the Bushongo when and where I had known Zappo Zap, how he had betrayed every master he had served: first the Arabs, the Pania Mutumbu, and now he proposed to betray the white man. I reminded them that not so long ago he had induced Mai Monene to rise against the Belgians, but, when Mai was defeated, Zappo Zap was the first to fly to the assistance of the victor and plundered Mai Monene's country. He would do the same with the Bushongo; whoever lost, he would be with the winner.

I said this at more length, managed to get Woto and Shamba into it, compared Zappo Zap to the palmworm destroying the tree which gives it abode (an old Bushongo saying), repeated the popular proverb about the two birds, which disputed about a kernel, when a third came and carried it off, etc. I did my best, I spoke passionately, because I felt very strongly and wished with all my heart to save

this kindly people from disaster. What I lacked in eloquence I made up in sincerity—and I carried the day! Why, the next day, whilst we were lunching, we heard a great commotion in the village, and we found out that one of Zappo Zap's men had come back, and the people had attacked and beaten him. I wished it had been Zappo Zap himself!

The Kimi Kambu paid me a visit after this, and told me that I had convinced him of Zappo Zap's falsehood; he complimented me so warmly that I had a presentiment he wanted something for himself. I was right: he requested me to use my influence with the King to have the initiation ceremonies revived. I naturally asked him to tell me all about them, and when he had done so I was convinced that not only would they do no harm, but certain of them might be decidedly beneficial to the people. The preliminary initiation was still in use, but the other stages had been neglected since Bope Mobinji's death.

When one of the king's sons has attained the age of eight or ten, he and all the boys approximately of the same age are secluded in an enclosure, where they remain nine days and are instructed in the Nkanda, the law. Their instructor is the Nyenge (obviously the same person whom the Baluba call Nyengele), and he teaches them the Ikina Nyimi, or royal prohibitions as distinguished from the Ikina Bari, the clan prohibitions. The former enjoin the child:

To respect and obey the King.

To respect and obey members of the royal family.

To respect mother and father (the mother comes first).

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To avoid offending the parents' feeling of propriety.
To avoid obscene language.

If his father's clothes are in disorder, tell him ;
if his mother's, leave it to his sister to do so ; he
must not make his mother blush.

To respect the dead bodies of his parents.

To respect women's modesty.

Not to ill-treat his wife, and not to meddle in other
people's quarrels.

To be just to his enemy ; rescue him when in
danger, and not to try to get him into trouble.

Not to permit several to attack a single person.

Not to kill, even in war, but to defend himself with
valour.

Not to steal ; if he covets a thing to ask for it, and
if he can't get it honestly, to do without it.

To observe certain rules concerning conjugal fidelity.

To respect other people's wives.

Not to gamble.

Not to tell lies to a tribesman.

During their seclusion the children's chief is the
king's son ; they are not allowed to see any woman,
and even their food is brought to them by a man.
After a few days the king's son goes to his father and
asks for permission to leave the enclosure with his
companions : " We want water (to wash in)."

This is refused till the ninth day ; then they come
out under the leadership of the king's son, with eyes
modestly fixed on the ground ; should they meet a
woman, she must hide. They go to the nearest river,
bathe, and then every boy searches for a certain kernel
in the bush. They return to the village in Indian
file, and pass before the king and the elders ; as they

do so every one hands over a kernel. These are carefully counted, and should one of the boys die, the parents have to inform the king, who removes a seed from the heap. This ceremony is called Tuki Mbula.

The second ceremony is a much more important affair, and takes place at the age of puberty; it is reminiscent of the Luba initiation ceremony, and is obviously derived from the Baluba.

Again the young people are secluded under the leadership of one of the king's sons. They are not allowed to wear any clothes, but have a special kind of comb in their hair; that of the ordinary people is made like a mat, that of the prince of brass; it is stuck into the hair upside down, so that the thick part of the comb forms a sort of mask over the eyes. Boys are considered impure during their seclusion, and women must not meet them. As each boy is obliged to make his own comb, none can be initiate who does not know mat-making, or, in the case of a royal scion, who has not learned the smith's craft. At night the elders go near the camp and make weird noises with the bull-roarer, which imitates very closely the howling of wild beasts. The Kananyenge, the elder who presides over these ceremonies, comes now and then to see the boys, who naturally complain to him about the ghostly sounds at night. He replies: "Surely you are not afraid of ghosts, you who are as a rule impudent to everybody, and have no respect for your elders! Don't you run away; soon I will show you the things that have frightened you."

After a month's seclusion the boys have to undergo the first ordeal, called Lobo (Fig. 9). For this the elders dig a trench about ten feet deep, making in the

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sides five alternate niches ; three on one side, two on the other. Opposite the fourth niche (E) a trench four feet deep is dug and plastered with clay ; this trench cuts across the whole passage, which is now covered with branches and earth ; the two ends are left open. It will be remembered that the Baluba similarly make a trench for their initiation. On the day of the ceremony an elder, covered with a leopard skin, hides in niche A ; another in full war-paint with a naked sword in niche D ; a smith with glowing embers and two red-hot irons in niche B, and a man in fantastic costume made of monkey skins in C. The

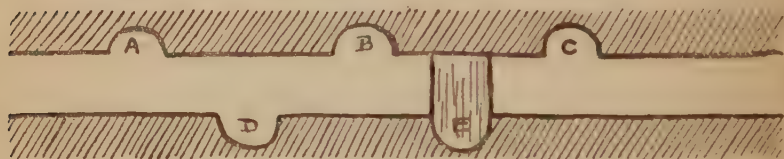


FIG. 9.—THE FIRST ORDEAL, LOBO.

transversal trench which had been made watertight with clay is now filled with water. When the elders are assembled the Kananyenge leads the candidates one by one before them. He tells the boy he will show him what had frightened him at night ; then he urges the youth to enter the tunnel. This the candidate does, but when the man dressed as a leopard jumps out of his niche, he retires in fear. The elders make fun of him : “ Why, young man, you who are always so impudent, why do you come back ? Go on get through that tunnel ! ” The youth implores to be let off, but the threat that he will never see his village again if he does not go through the tunnel urges him on. He braces himself up to pass before

the leopard, only to find himself confronted by the warrior brandishing his sword. Again he runs back to face the elders' chaff; he is forced by terrible threats to return. After many retreats he passes before the smith, who thrusts his red-hot iron at him, falls into the water, and finally rushes past the fantastic figure which threatens him. In nearly every case each new object makes him recoil, and he will attempt to soften

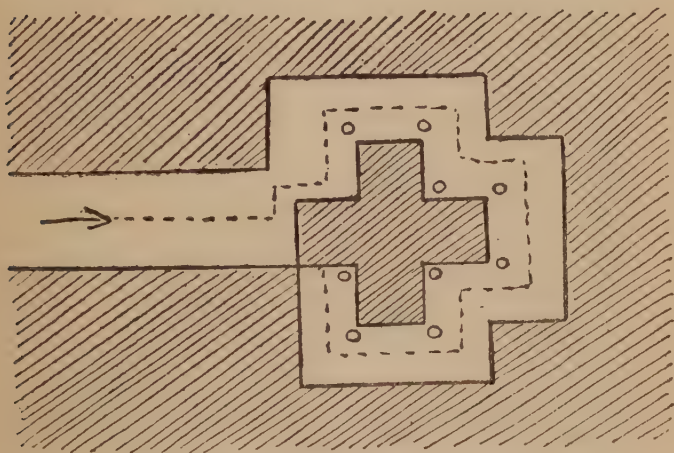


FIG. 10.—THE SECOND ORDEAL, GANDA.

the hearts of the elders by promises of good conduct for the future; but they know no mercy. When all the candidates have passed, they are told to return to their place of seclusion; the ordeal is meant to teach them to fear neither wild beasts nor foes, fire, water nor ghosts.

The second ordeal takes place about a month later. It is called Ganda (Fig. 10). For this another subterranean passage shaped like a cross is prepared. At every point marked on the diagram a pole is showing

above the ground, while its end reaches into the passage; a bucket of goat's blood has been hidden in the tunnel. All the youths are assembled, and the king invites the Kananyenge to show the boys what they have to do. He enters the tunnel, and as he goes through it he shakes each pole, so that his progress is marked by its oscillation above. Before emerging he smears himself all over with blood, and as he staggers out he appears to be very badly wounded; he gasps and howls, and finally falls down as if he were dead. The elders run to him, pat him all over, and declare that he has passed away; he is then quickly removed on a stretcher.

Then the king commands the young men to enter the tunnel, his son leading. They implore him to let them off, and finally he does so after they have promised good behaviour and paid him a ransom, which varies according to his mood. Then he addresses them as follows: "Young people, you never lack courage to provoke your parents, and now you would rather pay a heavy ransom than face an ordeal that an elder has undergone. I will let you off for once, but you will do well to be more modest in future. Now back you go to the forest; in future, I hope, you will pay respect to your betters."

A month later follows the third ordeal, Mete Nkanda. A thick trunk is chosen for the purpose; three-quarters of its circumference is surrounded by arrows stuck in the ground, the points turned upwards. The king and the elders sit down on the side of the tree which is free of arrows, the candidates on the opposite space. Behind them are the women of the village, who are allowed to assist at this last ceremony.

Where they and the boys are sitting the tree appears to be completely surrounded by the arrows. The Kananyenge climbs to the top of the tree and fixes there on a bunch of leaves. Then he shouts to the women: "Shall I come down?" and they answer, "Don't, the arrows will kill you!" Then he asks the same question of the candidates, and they encourage him to do it. Quickly he slides down, passing through the space free of arrows. Now the king orders the boys to follow his example, but their mothers at once raise a terrible outcry and protest that they will not let their boys be killed; nearly always the youngsters themselves ask to be exempt. After some haggling this is granted, and the Nyimi exhorts them to be good boys for ever afterwards.

Now they are free to bathe, and then are considered purified. For three months after this they have to work for the Nyimi and make salt for him by collecting certain aquatic herbs, burning them, filtering the ashes, and then obtaining crystals by evaporation. Having accomplished this task they can return to their village, and as full-grown warriors wear the bonnet.

I have mentioned the secret society existing amongst the Bangongo in the eastern part of the kingdom; its members wear the same combs in the same way as the Bambala candidates of the Nkanda; they, however, call them masks, and admit that they use them to hide their features. The story told about the origin of this Babende society shows its real character: One day an elder wanted to capture a young malefactor, but, as he was old and stiff, while the villain was young and active, the chief chose a certain number

of young men to give a helping hand as on similar occasions. To prevent retaliation on the part of the bad elements of the community, these men wore masks. The Babende became a secret society and gather together for dances, when certain members wear grotesque masks, and the friction drum, called "the leopard of the village," is sounded. This instrument is well known, though in miniature form, to Londoners. It used to be seen at Christmas time on Ludgate Hill, where it was hawked as a toy. It consists of a cylinder with a membrane over one side of it; the toy has a string attached to the membrane, which, when rubbed with the fingers dipped into resin, makes a cackling sound; generally a chicken, made of wool, is fixed to the top. Amongst the Bangongo the cylinder, two feet long, is made of wood, the membrane is of hide, and instead of string there is a stick to be rubbed. The sound produced is very gruesome and resembles the howl of the leopard. As soon as it is sounded all people who do not belong to the society hide; anyone caught is liable to be fined or even beaten.

Like the Baluba society of this kind it has its dignitaries and a chief; the candidates, who in olden times were probably severely beaten, now pass before the chief and his principal officer and receive a stroke from each.

The Babende used to practise human sacrifice; no doubt in the beginning the victims were the people whom the society thought fit to suppress for the public weal; later the killing of human beings became purely ceremonial, and now it has completely disappeared.

CHAPTER XVIII

PROHIBITIONS—THE SOUL—A FUNERAL—A TOWN OF
OFFICIALS—FOOD—PREPARING TO LEAVE

THE collection for the British Museum was increasing by leaps and bounds, and we had the greatest difficulty in finding cases to pack our purchases in ; by waylaying any person who passed within a hundred miles from us we managed somehow to get all we required. By now the Bushongo had found out what the things were we wanted, and that it mattered little that a wooden carving was broken, if the workmanship was remarkable. We paid good prices ; when our offer did not come up to the seller's expectation he knew that he could carry his goods away without fear that we might use our influence with the great men of the country to put pressure on him to part with them against his wishes. One day a man brought a lovely piece of old cloth for sale, but asked an exorbitant price for it, which I thought I was not justified in paying ; the Kimi Kambu, who was present, however, simply snatched the thing out of his hand, threw the goods I had offered at his head and bade him be gone. As soon as the Kimi Kambu had left us I recalled the man and returned his precious cloth to him ; besides, I asked him to accept, as a present, the goods he had received so that there might be no ill-will between

us. He would not take his cloth back though I promised him that the Kimi Kambu should never know of the transaction, nor would he accept the difference between their value and his own demands ; he said the cloth was not worth more, and he would have brought it back anyhow. So we parted good friends, and he induced several people to deal with me.

On the whole, such proceedings pay in the long run, though I cannot think without regret of an opportunity I missed. I heard of an object of great antiquity which was prized beyond all treasures by the clan which owned it, and the idea of selling it was scorned. I might have used my influence with the grandees to get it against the will of the owners, but I refrained in my own as in the interest of any collectors who might come after me. However, sometimes I fear that one day it may pass into the hands of somebody who will not recognise its real importance, and who, after tiring of it, may relegate it to some attic to rot and perish—it is perhaps better not to think of this. I will not say what this object was, as this might put some less scrupulous person on its track ; but I may mention that it enjoyed such veneration that it was taboo for anyone but a member of the clan to touch it. This is the only case of a tabooed thing having a certain idea of sanctity attached to it ; as a rule the objects of the ordinary taboos, Ikina Bari, are forbidden, but not sacred. A man whose taboo is the leopard may kill that animal, though he may eat neither its flesh nor anything slain by it ; he may not sit on its skin, nor use it for personal adornment ; the most important thing of

all is that on no account may he marry a person whose taboo is the leopard. No other restrictions are attached to the tabooed animal. The word Ikina, applied to the royal prohibitions (Ikina Nyimi) and the clan prohibitions (Ikina Bari), is applied to other prohibitions also: thus for a husband it is Ikina to carry on with another lady while his wife is pregnant, or even to meet one of his former sweethearts; the expected child would die. During the same period it is Ikina for him to pare his finger or toe-nails, to frizzle up his hair, or to remove the hair from his body; he may not wear red cloth, nor eat in company, except with small boys or very old men. It is Ikina for the king to hold a knife in his hand whilst talking to anyone; and it is Ikina for anybody holding a weapon to address the king. It is Ikina for the king to shed human blood, even in battle. The breaking of the Ikina is not a sin against God, it is a foolhardy act against the laws of nature, like overeating, or taking poison, and the punishment is generally sterility. God is not dragged into everyday affairs by the Bushongo, who consider Him an immaterial essence, too high above all that is human to interfere with individuals.

The Bangongo especially were explicit that He is the dynamic principle ordering the Universe. Of course, they did not use these words, they have no words to express these philosophic thoughts. But it is possible to analyse their ideas by their application, and it is the legitimate task of the ethnologist to attempt this interpretation, and then to put it into words which make it clear to his own people. I should like to quote one of the many ways the men with

whom I discussed these matters tried to shape them into words : " The law is neither a thing nor a person ; it is seen by its effects only as it induces and prevents certain actions. What the law is to man, God is to the world ; He is not like the Yulu (the chief policeman), who puts your neck into the forked stick if you break the law." A man's intelligence is the only divine principle in him ; it is God in him who directs his artistic efforts, and an idiot is a godless man. Life in itself is not divine, it is something concrete, and depends on a spiritual essence called Mophuphu, which, on death, according to the Bambala, rejoins the divine ancestor or, according to the Bangongo, finds a new abode in an unborn child. Besides this soul, every individual possesses a shadow, which departs with life, and a second, ethereal self, the Ido, corresponding to the Ka of the Egyptians, which may leave the body when it is asleep, visit friends in their dreams, but returns on awakening ; after death, it takes refuge in some animal, which will be killed by the deceased's nearest relative, and then the Ido perishes. Some unfortunate people have still another element in them, the Mondwa, the spirit of evil, and such people are witches and wizards. After their death the Mondwa wanders and causes accidents and disease ; the best way to lay it is to dig up the bones of the deceased and burn them.

These questions were, most appropriately, discussed after the funeral of an old dame of high degree, the mother of the Chikala. She died of old age on the 17th of October, 1908. Next morning we met an old man proceeding towards the Mushenge, lamenting loudly ; he was coming to be present at the

funeral. The defunct lady was lying in state in the hut where she had been born, and whither she had been transported as soon as she had breathed her last; the building was filled and surrounded by a wailing crowd. Their wailing seemed rather conventional, and consisted of certain rhythmical laments repeated in chorus. The funeral took place on the 20th. The corpse had been deposited in a coffin made of the midribs of palm leaves and lined with embroidered mats. It had on each side two handles made of vine (Fig. II). When we arrived it had not yet been closed and we could see the corpse, thickly painted with camwood paste and enveloped in fine cloth. It was lying on its back, and the legs were turned slightly to the right with the knees bent and mats to rest upon, these, reaching from the

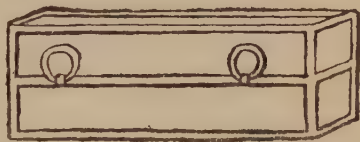


FIG. II.—A BAMBALA COFFIN.

shoulders to the feet, were turned up over the body. No other objects were visible in the coffin. Poles were passed through the handles and, after it had been covered, it was carried by four men to the grave; here a woman opened it slightly and threw into it a few small objects, apparently cowries. The grave was about five to six feet deep and the coffin fitted it tightly. After the burial the Chikala, as chief mourner, distributed amongst those who were present objects curiously shaped of camwood paste; they were beautifully modelled like lizards, tortoises, chameleons, flasks, axes, knives, human heads, etc., and corresponded to the English mourning rings which used to be given by the heir on similar occasions.

In former times any woman who had lost a near relative would retire to a special hut, abstain from eating cassava and cutting her hair for several months ; at the end of this period she would don a belt of a special shape, cover her shoulder with a mat and walk through the village with eyes fixed on the ground. All the women would follow her, but she was not allowed to speak to anyone nor to answer any greetings. Three days later the belt was removed, her hair cut, and the mourning came to an end.

We were now seriously thinking of leaving Mingenja, and that for an incredible reason : we felt that the little food we required for ourselves and our three boys was really more than what the royal residence could spare ! The Mushenge was a town of officials, courtiers and other consumers ; producers there were none. What we bought was all brought from the Bakono, the country-folk, who themselves had been greatly impoverished by a recent war.

Originally the Bushongo knew no other cultivated plants than millet, plantains and yams ; to this they added Indian corn later on. Shamba introduced manioc, but in 1884, when Dr. Wolf visited the country, he did not see any in their plantations. The Bangongo have not only a much greater variety of food-stuffs but, being purely Bantu, they are better agriculturists, and in a place like Misumba strangers would be only too welcome to buy their surplus crops. Within the last year the Nyimi had established plantations near the Mushenge, but at the time of our visit they did not yet produce very much.

The Bushongo do not require great quantities of



LUBA WOMEN.

In the background is the river Lualaba leaving Lake Mooro ; the hill, Kasengeneke, is surrounded on three sides by the lake and the river.

food ; like most Congo people they live very simply, and even the king would be content with a meal that any English pauper would refuse in the work-house. Only two meals are taken, one in the morning, a very light affair, and the principal one in the evening. A pudding, rather like polenta, made of cassava or Indian cornflour, dipped into a relish consisting of palm-oil to which some flavouring has been added—and that is all. The flavouring may be of certain herbs, or dried caterpillars, locusts, or white ants ; sometimes a little meat. The quantity of meat that will satisfy a dozen Bushongo would not be enough for an undergraduate's breakfast. Of course, on festive occasions they can gorge themselves, but that is a debauchery and not a necessity. They eat with their fingers, though now and then two-pronged forks are used to fish bits out of the dish ; in former times spoons, wooden and iron ones, were not unknown, and we managed to collect a few, but they seem to have gone out of use.

It is no wonder they ate little meat ; their fowls were few and lean, and nearly all goats had been killed during the war of 1904 ; sheep had completely disappeared. There was little game near the Mushenge, and what there was ran few risks from the Bambala, who were very poor hunters. What game they got was supplied by the few pygmies who were still in the country, and was reserved for the table of specially favoured people. We had been for some time on very short rations, though we potted now and then a few francolins and guinea-fowl ; at last Simpson went off to get some meat, as my state of health was such that I required something to strengthen me. He did shoot

buffaloes, antelopes, etc., but at such a distance from Mingenja that before the meat reached me it went bad.

The Bushongo living near the river were great fishermen, but then most of them were really of Basongo Meno stock ; near the Mushenge the people only fished for catfish in swamps. The real fisherman made channels during the low waters of the dry season, four to six feet deep and several hundred yards long, from the banks of the river inland ; as the river rose these were naturally flooded. Then baskets were put at the entrance of the canals, and the receding waters left the fish captured in them. The Bangongo made most ingenious automatic traps to catch fish ; some were provided with ingenious triggers, others permitted the fish to enter but prevented its escape. At the dry season whole villages were established on the sandbanks of the Sankuru, and all the male population was engaged in making preparations for the coming fishing season.

When we mentioned our intention of leaving, everybody appeared to be very sorry to lose our company ; how much of this was courtesy pure and simple and how much real liking I cannot say. I am sure the Nyimi regretted our departure ; he knew that as long as we were with him we would act as his spokesmen with the authorities and patch up the differences occurring daily between him and the elders. Besides that, he loved to hear about the strange things in Europe, about which we told him, in return for what he taught us about his own country.

I took good care that my impending journey should be well known all over the country, so that people

who wanted to exchange their antiquities against trade goods should have time to come and see me. Trade was brisk in the last few days, and some Bushongo who had held back their treasures in the hope of rising prices were now disposed to sell them at a discount.

The day before our start the Nyimi sent me another of the ancestral statues as a token of his friendship, and to Simpson he gave a mat of great antiquity. The elders, too, brought their parting gifts, so that our collections increased in the last moment beyond all expectations.

When we shook hands for the last time with the King we never thought that a very few years later he, who was in the prime of life, would die. The Belgians lost in him a devoted ally and the Bushongo a ruler who was, with all his heart, devoted to his country's welfare. He might have been a great man; all his misfortunes could not prevent him from being a very noble one.

CHAPTER XIX

BUSHONGO ARTS AND CRAFTS

THE arts and crafts of the Bushongo are as remarkable for what they do not produce as for what they do. Few crafts are older than pottery, and the Bushongo do not practise it. It cannot be ignorance; they use pots which are produced at their very door by the Basongo Meno, and the opportunity of learning their manufacture was never wanting, nor was it lack of natural aptitude. The only possible explanation of this strange condition seems to be that this nation having prided itself from times immemorial on its special gift of carving in wood, some Nyimi, with the intention of encouraging the art which was his as well as the nation's pride, forbade his people to model in clay, fearing that this more primitive and less arduous form of expressing their artistic ideas might damage or even destroy their special gift of woodwork.

The other remarkable thing is the Bushongo's poor capacity for music. There is music enough, and good music too, amongst those who are descendants of the Basongo Meno, but the Bambala, who, after all, are to a considerable extent of Luba blood, children of those Baluba who excel all Bantu in their musical performances, are amongst the worst musicians I have met in the Congo.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings the Bushongo are undoubtedly the greatest artists of black Africa ; as weavers, embroiderers, carvers in wood and as workers of metal they have not their equals in the whole continent ; for metal work one might except the people of Benin who, however, were taught by Europeans. As may be expected, great respect is

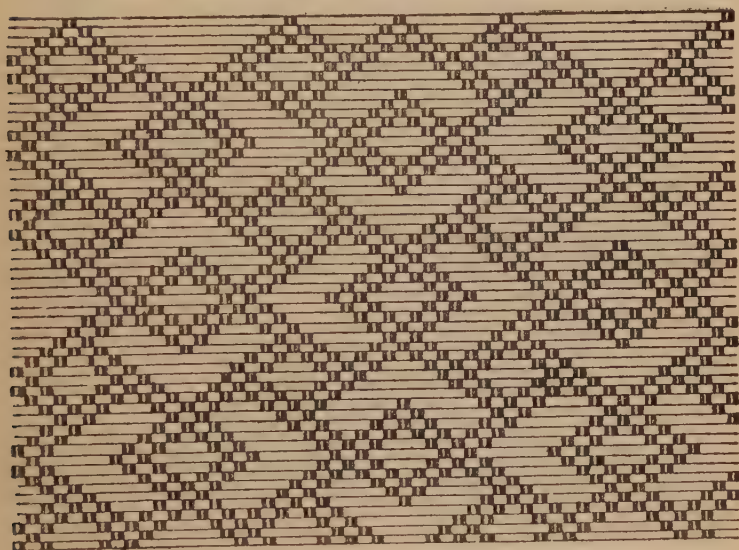


FIG. 12.—LACING CALLED "DRUM OF MIKOPE."

paid to those who excel in their craft ; everybody, without distinction of class, strives for proficiency in one or the other. No boy can be initiated who has not learned how to make their artistic mats, and every scion of the royal house must become a skilled smith. Even the kings of old loved to show their knowledge of welding iron, and to this day Miele, who lived early in the sixteenth century, is remembered as a great smith ; Bope Pelenge had his statue carved representing him as sitting in front of an anvil.

It is scarcely possible to imagine anything more primitive than the typical Bushongo mat: a number of thin laths tied together with string; out of this simple material they have, however, managed to produce objects of very great beauty. The strings used for lacing the laths together are of different colours, some of which, like the dark "lie de vin" red, are a secret of the past; the lacing is so cunningly done that it produces very charming symmetric designs. One of the commonest is "the drum of Mikope" (Fig. 12), which probably originated in the mind of one of the Mikope chiefs, who ornamented his drums with it. In many cases these patterns are conventionalised natural forms, as in that of Bisenga Budi—"shoots of a tree," where the leaves are quite distinctly aimed at (Fig. 13). The same designs in black on white are used among the Bangongo for ornamenting their walls, and one can easily imagine what a lovely sight a Misumba street is, with its regular, spick-and-span little huts, the walls of each formed from such mat-work, every owner vying with his neighbour in surpassing him in his artistic achievement. There are a great number of designs of this kind, and now and then an artist invents some new variation of an old one; these are called by the accepted name, to which "Idyakala" is prefixed, meaning that the thing is not quite orthodox.

Though weaving is of recent introduction amongst the Bushongo (about A.D. 1600), the cloth they produce, be it plain or ornamented, is equalled by that of no other African people. Everybody is familiar with raffia, the coarse stuff gardeners use to tie up

their plants; this is the only raw material at the disposal of the Bushongo weaver, or embroiderer. According to the use it is intended for, the fibre may be left whole or split up. The tool used is the ordinary African hand-loom; as everybody can make mats, every male individual can weave the ordinary cloth; for the finer products one has to go to the professional weaver. By splitting raffia into very

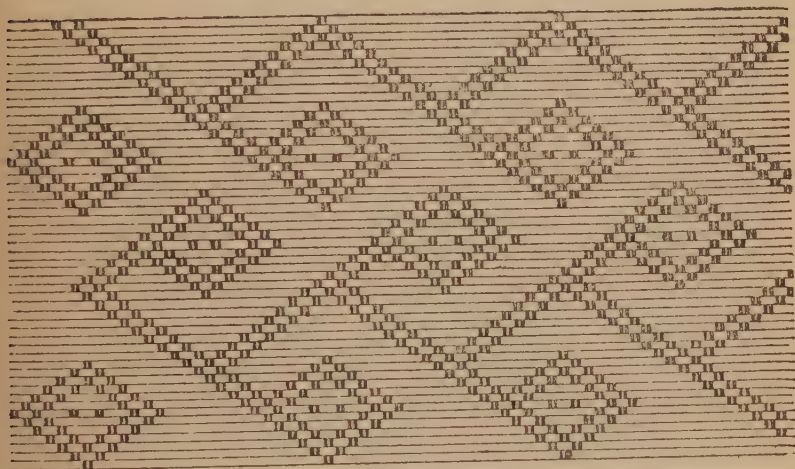


FIG 13.—BISENGA^v BUDI.

A conventionalised design of twigs and leaves.

fine filaments it is possible to produce cloth as delicate as the flimsiest linen; the Bushongo are the only people in these parts who manage to bleach this into snowy whiteness and, by pounding it in water for hours, to reduce it to the suppleness of silk. Later on, when we visited the Bakongo, we found that their cloth was even of a finer texture than that of the Bambala-Bushongo; but it was neither white nor as soft to the touch.

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The Bangongo distinguish themselves from the other Bushongo by making cloth with damask designs, viz., the fabric is ornamented by patterns produced in the process of weaving by the order in which the warp threads are raised and depressed for the interweaving with the weft; the design is made from memory and is frequently quite complicated. I do not remember among the many specimens brought back a single one with a mistake in the pattern.

Weaving is the occupation of men; embroidery that of women. The story of its origin—these people have stories for everything—is the following:

Once upon a time King Shamba sent a proclamation all over his kingdom that he wanted to take a wife, and he invited all the maidens to come and dance before him. Every girl wanted to be married to the king and become queen, and to please him they adorned themselves with the best finery they could obtain. Amongst all the maidens there was none who was as beautiful, or as clever, as Kashashi. For weeks before the appointed day she hid in her hut and there secretly embroidered her skirt with lovely designs. When the day of the dance came the king could not take his eyes off her, and chose her as his queen; but all the girls after this learned how to embroider.

The story being a Bangongo one it is unnecessary to say that the heroine is supposed to be a member of that tribe. But the Bambala, who are the greatest masters of this art, say that King Shamba brought it back with him from his travels and had learned it from the Bapende. There can be little doubt that this is so, as the Bapende do make pile-cloth, and are, with

the Bushongo, the only people in this part of the world who practise this art. It is not usual with people to give credit to others for their own inventions if there is no very good reason for it.

There is a considerable difference in the pile-cloth produced by the various tribes. No one acquainted with Bushongo art could mistake Bambala cloth for Bashoba, or either of these for Bangongo or Bangendi; but to distinguish between these two last requires a native expert. Roughly speaking, the characteristic of Bambala pile-cloth is that it is more often than not either in natural colour (ladies call it "champagne," or "shantung") or dyed, after the embroidery has been applied, dark red, a colour they know no longer how to produce; the pile is very short and very close and like the finest velvet. The Bashoba cloth is in texture like plush, and the patterns not only differ from the ground on which they are embroidered, but are often a combination of colours. The colours themselves are rich. The *musese*, cloth the Bangendi and Bangongo produce, is embroidered on cloth very loosely woven and the pile is thin, forming sometimes simply dots without continuity; the pattern is generally of a different colour from that of the ground, and the colours are very delicate mauve, yellow, with a good black.

The design is generally embroidered from memory, though the less skilled artist may mark it roughly with a black fibre. For pile-embroidery some bast is specially prepared: it is rubbed in the hand till it becomes as soft as silk and very thin. Several of these filaments are twisted together and threaded through an iron needle; with this they are passed

under a thread of the weft, and cut off with a special knife (Fig. 14), so that only about a sixteenth of an inch remains visible on each side of the weft, and this is repeated till the design is produced. The Bangongo and Bangendi frequently surround this with a border of ordinary back stitch in black. Velvet embroidery requires infinite patience and great concentration.



FIG 14.
EMBROIDERY
KNIFE.

For ordinary embroidery, which is the speciality of the Bambala, a very fine canvas is used, and the result is consequently of great delicacy. Nearly always the natural colour is retained, and the whole piece is ornamented with the same pattern. As the stitch is always passed under one thread of the weft, it is visible only on one side. Besides the ordinary stitch, a complicated chain-stitch is found in some of the older specimens: this is produced by making two parallel loose stitches close together, passing the thread under these and leaving it loose on the near side; then after passing it over the two first stitches and under the loose part of the third stitch, it is pulled tight (Fig. 15). Some old specimens have been collected dating from the early eighteenth century, which are made up of a combination of the simple chain stitch, of button-hole stitch, and of drawn thread-work; they look like lace, and the design reminds one of the illumination of old Celtic manuscripts. The amount of work required to produce such a masterpiece must have been stupendous. It is much to be regretted that this art is dying out;

even as a commercial proposition it would be worth reviving.

Simple cloth is frequently dyed, the colours used being red, obtained from camwood, yellow, a vegetable dye, charcoal, and white from a sort of clay; the combination of these produces the intermediate colours. Sometimes a piece of cloth is dyed the lighter colour, and after it has been dried thin laths

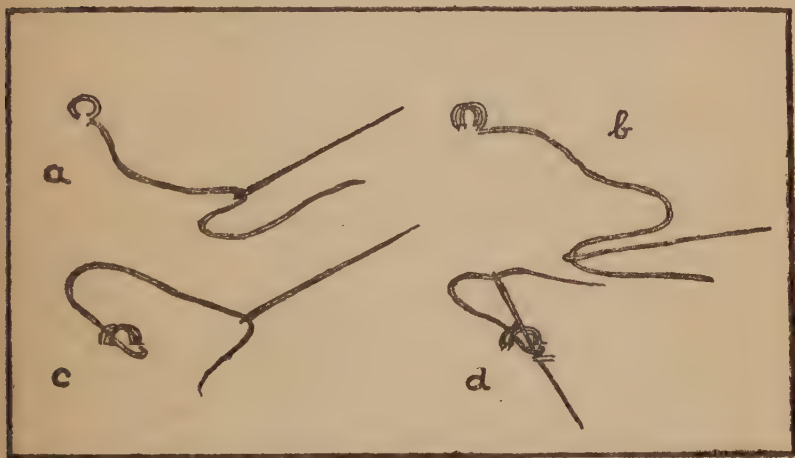


FIG. 15.—BAMBALA EMBROIDERY STITCHES.

are sewn on to form a pattern; then the darker colour is applied, so that the parts which have been protected by the laths appear finally as designs in the first colour. Dyeing cloth seems to be either a Bushongo invention, or learned from their eastern neighbours, as the Bakongo and Bashilele are not acquainted with this art.

It is as sculptors and carvers that the Bushongo are now known all over the world; within the last few years African sculptures have become the craze

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amongst certain collectors, and consequently the happy owners of Bushongo objects have seen their possessions attain a very great value. The principal objects produced are boxes—square, round, oval, semi-lunar, etc.; cups, dishes, pipes, drums, chairs and, ranking above all, human figures, of which the most remarkable are the statues of the ancient kings. These are interesting, not as historical documents only, but also as showing the tendency of Bushongo art. The oldest is that of Shamba Bolongongo (about A.D. 1600); it is from the artistic point of view decidedly the greatest. The head is obviously a portrait; it certainly aims at resemblance, reproducing faithfully a thick nose, heavy lips, a powerful chin. The later statues, like that of Misha Pelenge (about A.D. 1780), lack its power, and one gets the impression that the sculptor was a courtier who, trying to make his model look worthy of his rank, flattered him. There is a certain resemblance amongst these later kings which cannot be due solely to family likeness. The statue of Mikope Mbula (about 1800) stands out for two reasons: first of all the face is quite distinct in treatment, decidedly more West African; secondly, certain parts of the body, like the hands, are treated with a care not found in the previous statues.

Real artists are rare nowadays, and soon there will be none left; but in the past they must have been common, and everything seemed to have been ornamented with sculpture. The supports of old houses are sometimes elaborately carved; those of the Nyimi's palace are carved, but the work is quite modern and of poor quality. The application of

carving seems to have been so general that certain objects, used for the most intimate purposes, are works of art and of great beauty.

Horns of animals are used in all parts of the world as drinking vessels ; the Bushongo adorn the buffalo-horns, adapted for this purpose, with beautiful designs in relief ; one must try to cut horn with a steel knife to realise the difficulty of these people, who had only blades of iron at their disposal with which to work this hard material.

The Bushongo attribute the discovery of iron to divine inspiration ; in former times every village had its furnace to produce the metal, but now the imported article is so cheap and of such good quality that scarcely any is produced in the country. The art of working iron is, however, still very much esteemed ; it has been mentioned that the representative of the smiths wears the insignia of a member of the royal family, however humble his origin be.

The tools of the Bushongo smith are just as simple as that of the other people in these parts : a diminutive anvil, shaped like a nail, a flat leaf-shaped hammer, and an instrument which can be used as either (Fig. 16). There are no tongs ; any odd stick serves that purpose. The bellows are of the ordinary West African type ; they are generally worked by an apprentice or some casual visitor. Besides iron, copper and brass are known ; the former used to reach the country from the Katanga, and was worked up into certain conventional shapes, when it served as currency with the forest tribes. When used to make ornaments, like bracelets and anklets, it was first roughly cast in sand and then finished with the

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hammer. Brass came from the west, and was so rare that it had a value equal to our gold, and the king alone was allowed to possess or use it. Besides tools, like the hoe, or ornaments, like anklets, bracelets, hair-pins, the smith chiefly makes weapons; these are frequently ornamented: the handles with copper and iron inlaid wire patterns, the blade with inlaid copper and brass.

No Mushongo would be seen without a knife of state hanging behind his right hip; this has a leaf-

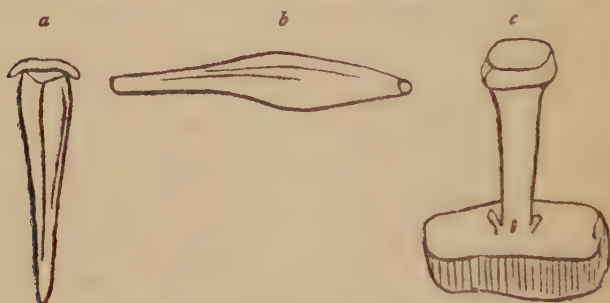


FIG. 16.—A SMITH'S TOOLS.

a. Hammer and anvil combined. b. Hammer. c. Anvil.

shaped blade about nine inches long; the handle is short and has a circular or square knob. Though it is only meant for show, in moonless nights the *ikula* has to be replaced by a wooden replica of it, so as to avoid brawls or accidents.

The war-knife, *ilondo*, is a foot and a half long; near the handle it is only about an inch wide, but widens out to about four at the end, which may be straight or rounded. The blade is always richly ornamented with lines and circles, and sometimes inlaid with copper; and the handle is decorated with copper and iron wire. This is the weapon introduced for war

in the time of Shamba ; being of an aggressive nature, it must never be worn in peace-time in the village, and when it has to be transported from one place to another it must be carefully wrapped up in cloth. The *goribi* is a war-knife of a later pattern, and a compromise of the old war-knife and the state-knife ; it has more or less the shape of an elongated *ikula*, but is as long as the *ilondo*.

Amongst all the Bushongo none are more famous as smiths than the Pianga.

Special knives are made to be used at dances, the *ikuri banga*, and those owned by men of wealth are elaborately ornamented with inlaid copper imitating lattice work. The handles of these knives, instead of being of wood, are of copper and shaped like a bell.

We often saw small children sitting in a circle and playing with sand, and in a moment of leisure I went up to them one day and inquired what they were doing. As some of my most intimate friends were amongst them, I was invited to sit down, and one of them, Minge Bengela, divested himself of his loin cloth and offered it to me as a seat. This bettered Sir Walter Raleigh's action, as my young gallant was devoid of all other clothing. The children were drawing, and I was at once asked to perform certain impossible tasks ; great was their joy when the white man failed to accomplish them. Draw this design (A) without lifting your finger ! And this one (B) ! At last I was shown, and made the following sketch of what I had learned. The design (C), supposed to represent the skin of a leopard, was produced by drawing the outline, and then making the spots by letting sand run out in a thin streak from the closed

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fist. It seems that it is in this primitive way that the foundations of these children's artistic education are laid.

Except for the statues already mentioned the human form is rarely found in Bushongo art, though cups in the shape of heads are common. We found later that the Bakongo differed in this, and that some of their cups represented the whole body, rather disfigured by certain crude details. Nor are animal forms common. The Itombwa divining appliances

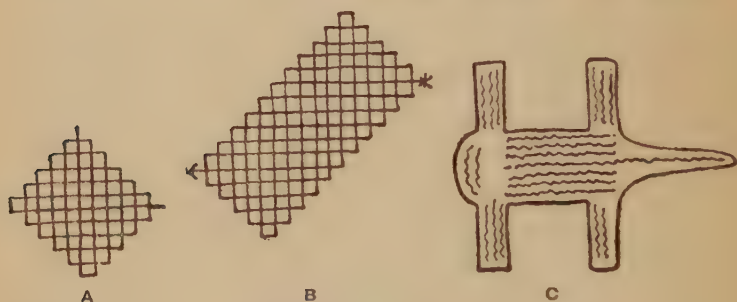


FIG. 17.—DESIGNS DRAWN WITHOUT RAISING THE HAND.

THE LEOPARD.

usually represent the crocodile or a dog, and the magnificent couch, so unwillingly given to me by the Buimbi, is ornamented with the head of a ram. Other shapes derived from nature are: the antelope's head on pipes, the scarab, the weevil and the iguana. Some of the boxes are shaped like huts, others like crescents, and the receptacles for oil like canoes. The most beautiful specimen collected by our expedition is in my opinion a cup (Fig. 18) ornamented with weevils and a lizard; its date cannot be fixed, but it must be of very considerable age as the wood shows signs of petrification. It can be seen in the British Museum.

An ancient royal throne seems to represent a sheaf of some flexible material tied together in the middle (British Museum Ethnological Gallery, Case R). All objects without exception are gracefully shaped, and

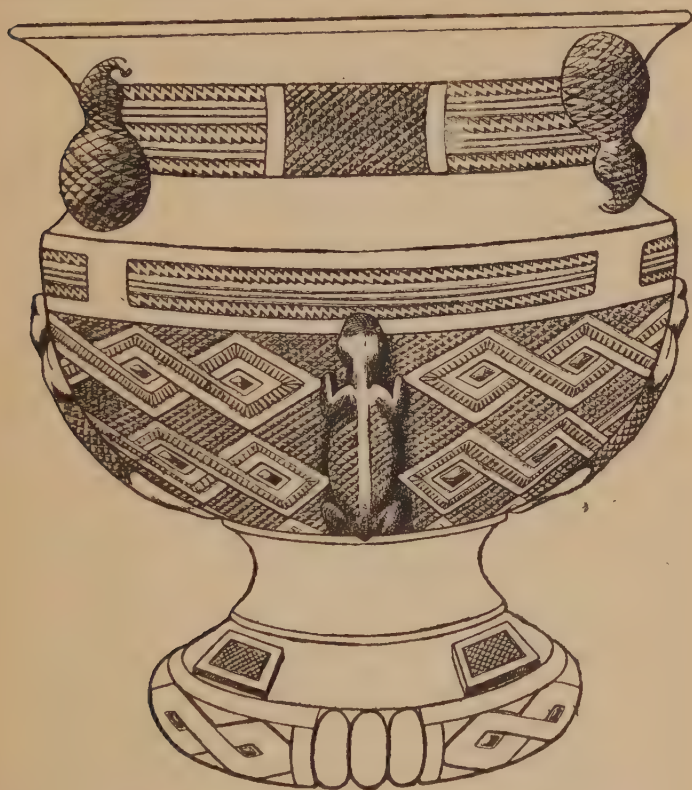


FIG. 18.—AN OLD BANGONGO WOODEN CUP, CARVED WITH LIZARDS AND INSECTS.

their harmonious outlines would give them beauty even without ornamentation.

Though some of the wooden objects have not an inch of surface without some carving, such is the sense of proportion amongst this people that there is

never the slightest appearance of over-decoration. There is no petty insistence on details, the design is

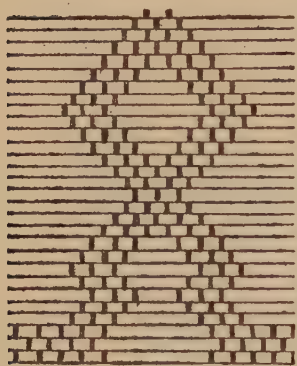


FIG. 19.—A CONVENTIONALISED DESIGN OF A HUMAN FIGURE.

The human head has little real likeness to the pattern (Fig. 27), yet it is clear that somehow it stands for it; such a conventional representation of human features is rare in Africa, though not uncommon among the Bushongo. A triangle enclosing a smaller one is called "the eye-brows"; and a very conventionalised design of a human figure can be recognised in Fig. 19, a design found on a house in Misumba. When the human face is surrounded by rays it becomes Phila, the sun, as on the splendid half drum already mentioned.

For some years past the scientific world has been agitated by the ques-

always bold, and shows that the artist had well made up his mind what he would produce and left nothing to chance. This is also shown by the fact that all patterns commonly used have well-defined names; these may be purely arbitrary, or derived from some real or fancied resemblance.



FIG. 20. — MUTU CHAMBE, OR THE HEAD OF GOD.

Designs leading up to the conventional figure.

tion as to whether a certain Central American sculpture stands for an elephant or for a parrot; to the lay mind it seems incredible that any such confusion should be possible. If a parrot is not like an elephant, an insect is perhaps less so, yet the designs of Fig. 20 are all taken from Bushongo objects, and show how such alterations may be made by stages to a conventional figure, and that

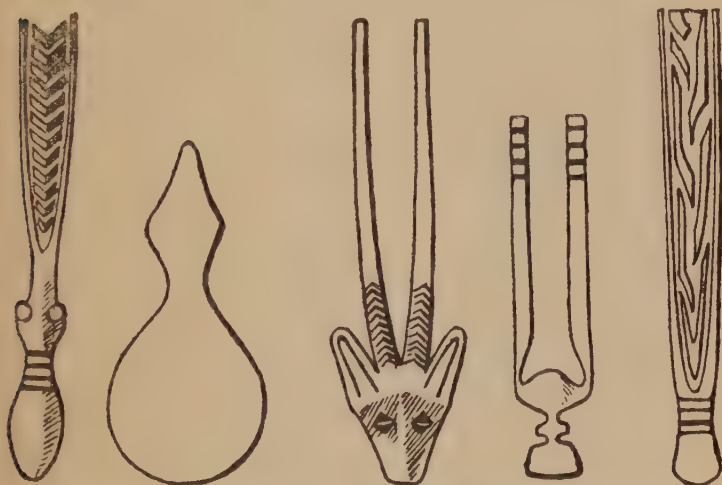


FIG. 21.—TRANSITION OF A DESIGN REPRESENTING THE HEAD OF AN ANTELOPE TO THE INSECT MUTU CHAMBE, TAKEN FROM VARIOUS WOODEN PIPES.

such a misunderstanding is not only possible, but unavoidable. All these patterns stand for Mutu Chambe, which means the head of God; it is represented clearly in 1 and 2 and less distinctly in 3 as weevil. No. 5 has altered to such an extent that, if one did not know what it is meant for, one might certainly take it for an elephant. Now the native artist can turn this weevil with the same ease into an antelope's head; the transitional figures are in Fig. 21. Now and

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then, a small part of an animal retains the name of the whole ; in one pattern, called the Iguana, one can, with a little imagination, distinguish a foot of that animal.



FIG. 22.—A BEAUTIFULLY CARVED PIPE.

It is worth mentioning that the scarab is frequently represented in Bushongo art ; and in connection with this it is useful to recall the important rôle a scarab, the goliath beetle, plays in certain ceremonies of the Baluba. On the beautiful pipe represented in Fig. 22 the animals surrounding the antelope's head are obviously scorpions, and the small bisected squares stand for cowries. The moon gives its name to the crescent. Hexagonal rosaces are called the tortoise.

Besides natural objects, manufactured things are frequently represented in art, and this may sometimes lead to quite important ethnographical conclusions.

Shields are unknown in Bushongo ; they are said to have been abolished by Shamba ; but they can be found sculptured on house-posts, which may date from the time previous or only slightly posterior to that abolition. When, after a long search, I managed

to discover the dilapidated remnant of perhaps the last shield in the country, it was found to correspond exactly to its representation.

When we come, however, to designs derived from textile industries it is much more difficult to follow

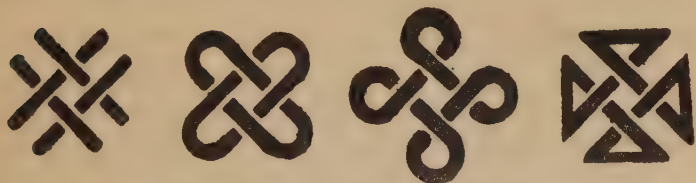


FIG. 23.—VARIATIONS OF THE IMBOLO DESIGN.

The third from the left is called *Ilema* (the xylophone), the fourth is called *Makashi Matama* (Matama's foot).

the native mind. As long as we had to deal with absolutely correct patterns which have come down from times immemorial there never was any hesitation in naming them; but when the artist had attempted to improve on these, or through sheer

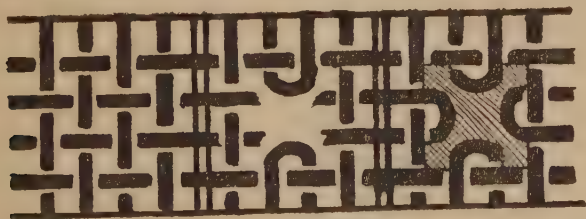


FIG. 24.—SUGGESTED EVOLUTION OF THE IMBOLO DESIGN.

incapacity or inattention deviated from the form usage had sanctioned, even our native experts were often in disagreement, and the controversy became so lively that we expected them to come to blows at any time. No man ever claimed to be an expert in embroidered patterns; this belonged to woman's

realm, who again would give no opinion on carvings ; and yet we find the same designs in both. We Europeans see a thing as a whole ; the native con-



FIG. 25.—DEVELOPMENT
OF THE MONGO (KNEE)
DESIGN.

siders one small part as essential and the rest as accessory ; the name is derived from the essential. What complicates matters still more is that what is the basis of the design to the embroiderer, may be simply an unimportant detail to the sculptor ; hence husband and wife may call the same thing by different names.

The simple interlacement of lines, Imbolo (Fig. 23), can be changed into innumerable other patterns,

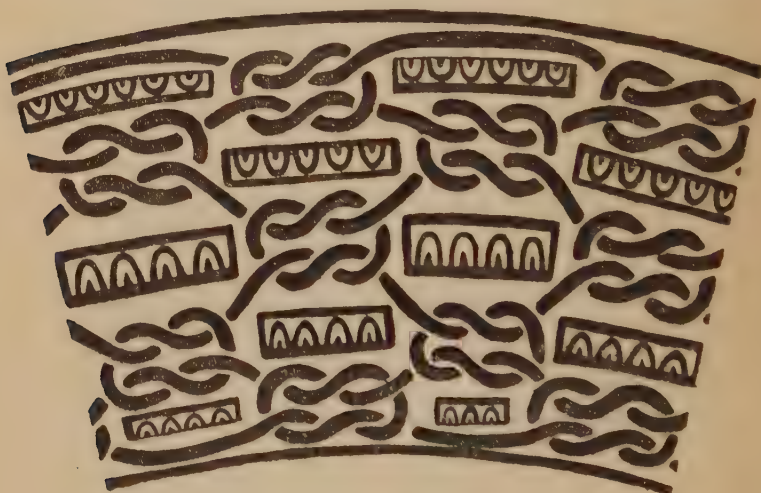


FIG. 26.—BUSHONGO DECORATIVE ART.

either by connecting the ends of the lines at certain intervals, or by interrupting them, or again by doubling them in certain places ; nearly all Bushongo patterns

are derived from variations of this theme. Amongst the names of patterns in straight lines are "The back of the python's head," "Smoke," "Woto," "The tortoise," and many others.

Nor are curved lines absent in Bushongo decorative art; some of these, like Fig. 26, are very beautiful indeed. There is plenty to be said of these and of



FIG. 27.—DESIGN ON AN IMITATION IN WOOD OF A BUFFALO HORN.

many other expressions of this people's artistic ideas; but this subject requires a volume to itself, and I must be satisfied with showing in a sketchy way the great gift they possess, and refer those specially interested in the matter to the British Museum and the ethnographical survey of the Bushongo, written by myself in collaboration with Mr. T. A. Joyce, which has been published by the Tervueren Museum.

CHAPTER XX

MAYUYU—BUYA'S TERRORISM—SUGAR TONGS—THE
BAKONGO WOMEN—DIFFICULTIES

IT is puzzling, to say the least, that in the heart of a country of over eight hundred thousand square miles, entirely under European administration, there should still be found a narrow little strip of land, eighty to a hundred and fifty miles wide as the crow flies, which has not only resisted the white conqueror, but has succeeded in keeping all foreign travellers without its frontiers. Yet such is the case of the country between the Kasai and Loange rivers. The famous missionary George Grenfell, with Major Sarmiento and eight hundred natives, had tried to cross it and failed. A military expedition passed the frontier, but was never seen again. Captain Hilton Simpson and I at length succeeded ; but if there is any merit in this let it be given to those to whom it is due. Simpson was splendid, always cool, always reliable, always fearless. For the last-mentioned quality he deserves no credit ; he was born with a natural defect, and the sense of fear was absent in his system, just as some people are born devoid of an arm, and others without the sense of smell ; but his defect was decidedly useful. However, if any credit is due for the exploit, two people have a greater claim than he, and these are Mayuyu and Buya. Mayuyu was one of the twenty-three

Bambala from the Kwila (who have nothing but the name in common with the Bambala of Bushongo), who volunteered to follow me on this expedition; all were splendid, but Mayaya was the best of all. Higher praise is impossible. It was always Mayaya who went to reconnoitre; it was Mayaya who by his charming ways and invariably good temper managed to dispose the natives in our favour even before our arrival, and when there was trouble Mayaya knew how to make a friend in the enemy's ranks, and thus keep us informed of his plans and intentions. The Bakongo would have starved us into submission had not Mayaya organised an "underground" way by which supplies reached us. He answered insults with flattery, sufficiently tinged with sarcasm not to be mistaken for fear. An invitation to a fight met with ready acceptance—on condition that the challenger accepted an invitation to a dinner, previous to the combat. "Let us talk before we kill each other; we won't be able to do it after," he would say—and the swashbuckler was appeased by his blandishments.

What Mayaya achieved by gentle persuasion was strengthened by Buya's terrorism. He was a child about eight years of age; it is impossible to state it exactly because Congo natives do not keep count of their years. "Why count?" said a dusky sage to me; "when they are many you will feel their weight." With Buya the thing became complicated; sometimes, or, more correctly speaking, nearly always, he was so grown up. To hear him call the hostile chief of Kenge "that ill-begotten son of a barren mother and twenty he-goats," made it difficult to associate him with the products of our nurseries; or when,

after a thirty miles' march, he refused to give up the little rifle which had been, at his own request, entrusted to his care, he was a man ; but the day we went home and left him under good care on the shore, when he was sobbing bitterly, stretching his brown arms longingly after us and kicking away viciously all the precious treasures which we had given him on parting, he shrieked, "I don't want these, I want you !" he was a little child again. It is no good talking about him as a child ; one waxes sentimental. Buya had been entrusted to me by his father, a Muyanzi chief, who had asked me to take him with me so that his son might see the world. As I knew we would run some risks I refused at first, but the chief being an old friend insisted, and I had to give in. I never had to regret it. To begin with, the presence of a child was a source of great joy to the white and black members of the caravan. He had never been outside his village, and was quite primitive ; he had not yet acquired the habit of wearing garments, but our "old" boy, Sam, a gentleman of about fifteen, having lent him an old pair of breeches, he longed to have some of his very own. So he came to me and explained that he found it humiliating to wear dirty trousers belonging to his friend, and yet his situation demanded that his nakedness should be covered. "If you were to give me some cloth, a big piece, I might make myself a fine pair, worthy of me and you, and then you would be proud to have such a smart boy." Could I refuse ? We were at Kikwit, where there was a store, so I gave him a note that he should be supplied with what he wanted. He chose a piece of calico, white with blue



BUYA'S FIRST BREECHES.

Made by himself, regardless of expense,

INCONVENIENT CURRENCY.

The only currency accepted by the Bashilele and Bakongo is iron rods, extremely unwieldy and costly to transport.

stripes. He borrowed my scissors, a needle and some cotton, and set to work to make himself a wardrobe. When he came to show me the result of his labours I did not even smile, but I took my camera and produced a picture of it for posterity. He would have none of those skimpy things I wore ; his trousers were large and long and fell in elegant folds over his feet, except when they slipped beneath ; then they impeded his progress to some extent. To see him swagger through the village and brush disdainfully aside any Mumbala in native garb was worth a pint of money.

Buya had a strict sense of discipline ; what I said was law. Had I told him to kill a man, he would have done it without the slightest hesitation ; he knew how to obey without asking questions, without even pretending to think. It is this gift that makes the ideal soldier ; not the one who wins the battles, it is true, but the soldier who is marked out for promotion. If I told him to call Hilton Simpson in the morning, and my friend hesitated to leave his bed, Buya would pull the blanket off him regardless of the fact that he was a white man. I had said so—that was enough.

When I had left Europe, a dear old lady who wanted to present me with something really useful gave me a pair of sugar tongs ! Such things were quite unknown in the Congo, but in memory of my friend I used them. They were much admired by Buya when I fished a piece of sugar out of an old tin ; in this operation Hilton Simpson, too, displayed remarkable grace. This made a great impression on Buya ; he was puzzled. Why, here were fellows who

had fingers like everybody else, and instead of using them when they wanted sugar they preferred that uncanny contraption, the handling of which certainly required considerable skill; surely this must be some religious rite by which they showed respect to their ancestors! One day we had the local agent to tea; by now Buya had been specially appointed to serve us at that meal. When he handed the sugar round, our unsophisticated guest naturally plunged his fist into the tin containing it. With an indignant motion Buya thrust his hand aside, and brandishing the sugar tongs in his face asked in a voice trembling with indignation: "Now, sir, what are these made for?" Tableau.

If Buya did not mind, nay, liked to be lorded over by me, he was not averse from lording it over other people, and one day, while we were staying for a short time in a European settlement, he hired for a few empty bottles, battered tins, etc., a servant of his own, a boy about his own size. How he bossed that lad! But he was at his best in hostile country. When we had to forbid our men to enter a village stockade because we feared they might be killed, Buya would go there and just tell the natives what he thought of them. Being a Nuyanzi, he was a cannibal. He did not make the slightest secret of this fact. And he would challenge the natives to start fighting; he told them that, of course, they would all be shot and then he would have a fine tuck-in! With his arms akimbo in front of a bearded old warrior, as dour as they are made, he would tell him how he would smash his head with a woman's hoe handle, cook his brains, with a pinch of salt and just a flavouring of red pepper, and dip his bread into this dish.

Then he would smack his lips and run away laughing like an imp. The fact that we dared to have a child with us, and his unbounded check, helped no doubt to impress the Bakongo.

Proximity did not improve the reputation of these people, and as we approached their country the natives told our men what terrible fellows they were and that we were all sure to be killed by them. The Bambala porters stood it for a while ; but at last they talked matters over among themselves and came to me in a body. Their spokesman, speaking as if he were not in the least concerned in the matter (a favourite method with natives when they ask for a favour, or have a complaint to make) said, "These men say that they have been informed that the Bakongo will kill us all if we go into their country ; so they ask to return to their village." I thought the request a reasonable one, though it put me in a sore plight. However, I had no right to drag these people into danger against their will, so I told the men to come in an hour when I would pay them their due ; they were free to go. After an hour they came back ; the goods were ready for payment ; the spokesman asked me, "If we go home, will you still proceed to the Bakongo ?" I answered in the affirmative. "Then, please put these goods back because we shall go with you ; if you want to have your throat cut we shall at any rate share your fate." And as they had come, so they strolled leisurely back to their quarters. Whilst the journey lasted they never complained, they never tired, they never failed us. So next to Mayuyu and Buya they, too, deserve to be honourably mentioned.

Last, but not least, I have to thank the chief of

Insashi; he put us into communication with the Bakongo, arranged our passage across the Loange, and gave us such a good character that we started under the best possible auspices. Insashi is one of those few Bakongo villages which are situated on the left bank of the Loange, and serve as outposts to keep up some communication with the rest of the world. No canoe is allowed on the left bank of the river, and when the people of Insashi want to see their own folk (there is an Insashi on the other bank), they have to shout across and ask for a dug-out to come and fetch them. We had been warmly recommended to the chief by Dilonda, the head of the local Bapende, and he received us well and promised us all possible help. He visited the opposite village several times, and at last he succeeded in persuading the Bakongo to ferry us over. They came with one boat, in which I passed the first to the other side; I took absolutely no arms with me, to demonstrate my peaceful intentions. It took some time to cross the river, as in the middle the current was very strong. Having landed me and my chattels the Bakongo returned to fetch more, Simpson staying till the last load had passed. As I knew that he would be rather nervous about me, I sent him a note that everything was well.

Where I had landed the forest came down to the water's edge, and the silence was only now and then interrupted by the screech of a parrot, the puffing sound of the hornbill's flight, or the rustling of a bough when a monkey came furtively to inspect the intruder. There I sat down on one of my boxes and waited for something to happen. Something did happen. An ant, one of those charming little

creatures which the natives have ingeniously named "fire-ants" had somehow found its way under my putties and suddenly bethought itself of justifying its name. Slapping my leggings having produced no practical result, I slowly undid my puttie and turning my stocking down wanted to "break his bones between two stones," when all of a sudden a chorus of "Ah's!" came from the surrounding thicket. Let me observe that it was not an "Ah!" of disapproval; it resembled the "Ah!" of the children when the doors are thrown open and they perceive the Christmas tree laden with all their hearts' desires. I quickly drew the stocking up and then tried to pierce the undergrowth to make out who were the owners of the admiring voices. Some vague outlines indicated human beings, but it took me some time before I distinguished first one, then several, women, whose eyes were fixed on me. I made friendly signs inviting them to approach, but without result; when I raised my voice and called to them to come out there was at first the beginning of a stampede, but one young lady, braver than the rest, stepped out of a calamus thicket and stood there, her hands crossed over her breast. I had plenty of time to observe her. What struck me first was that her abdomen was covered with cicatrices similar to those of the Bushongo, except that some thick parallel lines were drawn underneath the navel. Her dress, too, was similar to that of the Bushongo, falling from the hips to the knee, but so loosely twisted round the body that it did not look like a permanent fixture. When she smiled I could observe that her top front teeth had been knocked out and that the others were filed. The

hair on her forehead had been shaved ; the rest was plaited together and the plaits stuck down spirally with some glossy black substance (soot and oil, as I ascertained later), so as to fit tight to the head in the shape of a skull-cap. Several heavy iron bracelets, about half an inch in diameter, dangled on her arms, and I thought that if during my stay she inflicted a conjugal chastisement on her husband, I would have a fine opportunity of observing a funeral. Everything was native-made, there was no vestige of European goods on her.

One by one other women appeared ; those behind pushed those in front and told them not to be silly and to ask me—I could not make out what. There was talk about a leg, but there was too much giggling to understand them. They got nearer and nearer, and I dared not move for fear of frightening them away. At last one girl, younger than the rest, pointed to my leg. She wanted to see it. But I was not going to let everybody look at my lovely leg like that ; I at once grasped the possibilities of the situation. To make their mouths water I turned one of my sleeves up. As my hands, face and neck were burnt coppery brown, and tropical anæmia gives every one a very fair skin, my arm naturally seemed a very wonderful sight to these people who had never seen a European. They simply shrieked with joy and insisted on seeing my legs and my chest, etc., to make sure I was white all over. One lady passed her finger over my arm, and was duly astonished that the paint did not come off. Then I proposed that they should carry my loads to the village ; every woman who carried one would be paid, and above that shown my lovely leg ;

for the second load she would be allowed to touch it. Just as London ladies precipitate themselves at a sale on some such bargain as an evening dress for 6s. 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ d., the Bakongo women went for my loads, and in a few minutes the place was cleared. Fortunately the second boat arrived with enough to supply the most urgent demands, and when Simpson came with the last one all the loads had been carried to the village.

The village was a clear proof that the Bakongo had the same ideas as the Bushongo, but have remained unchanged for a long period. Here, too, we found enclosures, but instead of the leaf-walls which are considered sufficient amongst the Bushongo, the separations were palisades formed by solid stakes driven into the ground. Such a wall surrounded the whole village, and the single entrance was so arranged that no more than one person was able to enter at a time. Outside the village were a number of granaries on piles, and with walls of palm-leaf midribs which allow the free circulation of air. The Bushongo had none like those, and they must be an original Bakongo idea. There were several sheds outside the palisade, and under these we saw some men weaving, others carving, and others talking amongst themselves; their good manners forbade them to take too much notice of us. The men were dressed pretty well in the same way as the women, except that their skirts were a little shorter and tighter, they had less cicatrices, and their armlets were much thinner. The chief's skirt reached nearly to his ankles. He was friendly, presented me with a goat and promised me carriers for the next day.

In a way the features of the Bakongo were a

disappointment to me; I had expected to find in them a further proof of their northern origin, and, instead of that, they looked just like all the Bantu people of these parts, and less "Azande" than the great Bushongo aristocrats.

The elders of the village and the chief came to have a conference, and all went well while I explained to them that we were neither traders, missionaries nor officials, and that all we wanted was a little hunting on our way to the Kasai. When, however, I mentioned that I should like to take some presents to their great chief, the disposition of the men suddenly changed: some rose and went away, others looked angry. I had touched upon a subject which obviously aroused their hostility. I thought it wise to break up the conference and return to my tent.

Meanwhile Mayuyu had somehow managed to make friends; we heard men calling him to share their meal, to drink some palm-wine with them. So I nodded to him to approach, and talking in Kimbala which the Bakongo could not understand, asked him to find out what had caused the displeasure of the elders. He went off, and soon I saw him in the company of some man making himself agreeable, talking, laughing, cracking jokes. Buya was holding forth to an admiring crowd; they understood but few words of what he said, but, what words failed to express, gestures helped to make clear. I was glad to hear on his authority that Simpson and I used to shoot our daily elephant before breakfast, and that the buffaloes that had fallen before our rifles were greater in number than the blades of grass between the Loange and the Kasai. It filled me with pride

to be proclaimed the greatest chief of Europe and all other countries ; but when he began to explain that the only way to my heart was through him, and that anyone who wanted to obtain anything from me could do no better than bribe my confidential adviser who was no other than Master Buya, I was beginning to get a little nervous. I went to the fire near which I heard his voice, but when I saw the little beggar sitting there with a big pot of palm-wine in front of him, sucking away at the chief's pipe, I was reassured. Who would take such a child seriously ?

The village had gone to rest ; the last drunkard had been led home by his friends and tucked away by his faithful spouse, and the flutter of bats alone broke the silence of the night, when the flap of my tent opened quietly and Mayuyu appeared. He explained to me he had learned that we had had to wait for our passage across the Loange because the permission of the great chief, whose name was Goma N'Vula (the Drum of Rain—Thunder), had to be obtained ; that the great man had granted it reluctantly, but had at the same time given strict orders that on no account were we to be allowed to come to his village, and any attempt of ours to do so was to be resisted by force. He told me that the natives simply trembled at Goma N'Vula's name, and that the best thing for me would be never to mention it. We had made a good impression, and the natives were well disposed ; but there had been a lot of drinking, and some of the men when under the influence of palm-wine talked rather "biggetty." The chief of the village next to this one was very well disposed. Satisfied with this news I went quietly to sleep.

CHAPTER XXI

UNWIELDY CURRENCY—BAKONGO ORGANISATION
—CHARACTERISTICS—TRANSPORT DIFFICULTIES—
A CRISIS

THINGS had gone well with us, and we were getting rather too confident about the final success of our journey. Our plan was to proceed by slow stages towards the Kasai so as to see as much as possible of the people ; on our way we were going to attempt to visit the great chief, Goma N'Vula ; at his court we were certain to be able to gather more information than amongst the simple "country folk," and, as for collecting, well, we were going to overhaul the royal treasury and exchange our European goods for the beautiful carvings of which we had already found some samples. We soon found out that we were not quite as rich as we had imagined ; of all our goods the only ones that were acceptable to the natives were bars of iron and "matchets," the cheap cutlasses they use for all sorts of purposes. Now, iron, though greatly prized by them, was decidedly an unwieldy currency to carry about, and we found that the value of a load represented only a few days' wages for its carrier ; the abundance of things worthy of purchase and our calculated generosity soon made us run short of this commodity, and this nearly led us to disaster. Salt

was acceptable as a tip, but not of much use otherwise ; as for cotton goods and such-like stuff they had no value whatever, simply because the cunning old Goma N'Vula had forbidden their use under the penalty of death ! From his point of view it was a very wise though drastic measure : peaceful penetration is best achieved by creating a want and then making its supply dependent on the admission of the trader ; after the trader comes the missionary, after him the state official, and they bring in their suite tax-collectors, judges, soldiers and other troublesome, meddling people, whose activities bring about without fail the collapse of the native's whole social fabric, as it happened with the Bushongo.

But meanwhile we enjoyed being in a country untouched by foreign influence, and it was astonishing to what an extent law and order reigned everywhere. The Bakongo left their neighbours alone, and saw well to it that their neighbours did not interfere with them ; their fortunate position between two wide rivers facilitated this policy. Though now and then there occurred squabbles between villages, on the whole the country was as peaceful as could be, and such a thing as murder or highway robbery was practically unheard of. This was the outcome of that well-recognised principle of Bantu society that a village is responsible for its inhabitants, and that any act of the individual involves his whole clan. A people, where every single man, woman, child is personally interested in the maintenance of order, and may have to pay with life and goods for a breach of the peace, requires no policemen. The absolute chief, Goma N'Vula, though his very name filled

the natives with awe, seemed to interfere little with village life, and was nothing more nor less than the jealous guardian of the country's independence. With the exception of chiefs, monogamy seemed to be general, and as no scandal came to our ears we must assume that sexual morality was at a high level. Married couples seemed to get on well, and there could be no doubt about the fathers' devotion to their children. As for religion, there was not a single fetish in the whole country, and ancestor worship was general. God, the creator of the world, the primary cause of all things, was connected with the living by a long link of ancestors who shared in the honour paid to Him. The touching reverence for the departed always appealed to me for its purity from all selfish motives: the firstfruits of the fields were deposited at the shrine, not with the intention of rendering the disposition of the dead favourable to the living (for were they not their parents, and did parents ever require a bribe to love their children?), but a token of affection which gave the giver as much pleasure as it was hoped it would give the receiver. Not only were there no "graven images" of God, but their ideas refused to attribute to divinity any human failings like lust for revenge, severity, etc. Bad actions were not punished by God; their opposition to the laws of nature caused automatically, without divine interference, some unpleasant reaction. Thus, if the firstfruits were not presented to the ancestors it was the soil, deprived of the strength that had its source in this pious action, which would not bring forth the crops; it would remain barren as if no seeds had been sown. If a man broke the

laws forbidding the marrying within his own clan, it was the blood of the clan in him that suffered from the pollution and made him suffer in his turn.

Every village seemed to be practically self-supporting; the few things really required which could not be produced at home reached the Bakongo through a trade from village to village; these were iron and salt. Isolated from the rest of the world, they had not even heard of sleeping sickness, and, if they were, as we have good reason to believe, a good picture of the Bushongo before the advent of Shamba, we must admit that the natives of this part of the world were in the sixteenth century a very happy people.

It would however be utterly wrong to generalise for Central Africa from this single spot, and come to the conclusion that the advent of the white man has been a curse to the continent. At first, bringing with it the disgraceful trade in human beings, it certainly was, but later, when it stopped the depredations of warlike tribes, and the oppression of bloody tyrants, it established in many parts a peace and order never known before. But as far as the Bushongo and kindred people are concerned there was no need for intervention, and anyone who is fond of these nations may be excused if he cherishes the illusion that without any foreign interference these people might have worked out their own salvation. I should like, in all humility, to suggest to the Belgian authorities that the country between the Kasai and the Loange be made a human reservation, and the natives be preserved from all contact with Europeans, so that, when the whole continent has been altered, there should still remain a spot where the black man is left

in his original simplicity. Future generations of scientists would bless them for their foresight. This could be done all the more easily, as the tract of land is not large and contains no treasures worth fighting for.

The organisation of the villages was much simpler than among the Bushongo: there was the chief who wielded the power with the assistance of a few elders. In a few places we noticed that there were two chiefs, and I believe that one of them was the head of the clan, while the other presided over temporal matters. The head of the clan was generally less well disposed towards us than the chief, as we were to learn later on. Though order reigned everywhere, we found the Bakongo great drunkards, and very few men were sober in the evening; but it must be said that this did not lead to any unpleasantness; on the contrary, the more a man was intoxicated the friendlier he seemed to be. If there was any trouble, the elders interfered; if there was a breach of the law, the chief punished and there was no appeal against his judgment. Cases of witchcraft led to the administration of the poison ordeal: if the decoction of the strychninous plant used for this purpose killed, guilt was established; if it was vomited, the innocence of the accused was proved. We were not long enough in the country to be able to inquire into such delicate matters as initiation and secret societies, and in casual conversation we found traces of neither.

The children, lovable as everywhere, played games similar to those of the Bushongo, cat's-cradle being a great favourite. Ball games, shuttlecock and tops were frequently seen, and naturally the little ones imitated their elders in play.

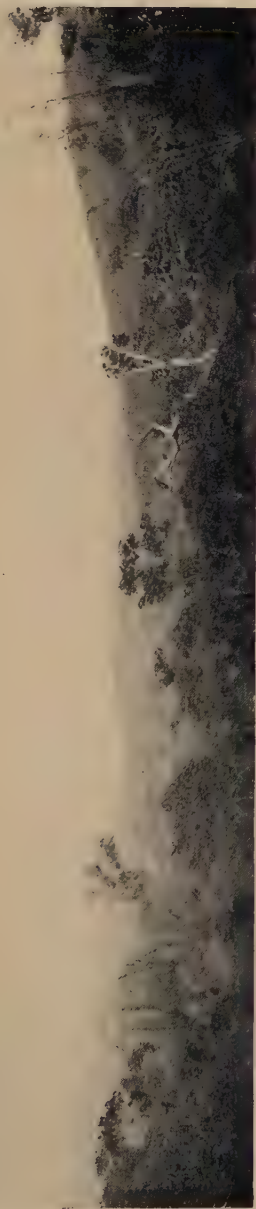
The Bakongo seem to marry at an earlier age than their eastern kinsmen ; we have seen married women who were practically children. The marriage is negotiated on both sides by professional go-betweens, who are paid for the trouble they take.

The taboos were the same as among the Bushongo. In all villages we found the divining appliance "Itombwa" mostly shaped like a crocodile, but now and then like a dog (?), or with a human face at one or both ends ; some of them were very beautifully carved. The little disc, which sticks to the flat surface when the answer is in the affirmative, was made to prescribe certain occasional taboos in case of illness ; the magician suggested the abstention from certain food, or from smoking, etc., and when the right thing was mentioned the Itombwa confirmed it.

The Bakongo are slaves of My Lady Nicotine, though not to the same extent as the Bushongo ; they both are individual smokers, i.e. everybody smokes his own pipe instead of passing it round as most Bantu do. The Bushongo pipe stem is curved, and the wooden stem is sometimes beautifully ornamented ; the designs vary greatly, but near the bowl there is always the more or less conventional head of an antelope ; sometimes this is to such an extent conventionalised that it might be confused with another design of theirs, "Mutu Chambe," God's head, which is a scarab (Fig. 21). Amongst the Bambala the bowl is like a truncated cone, wider on the top than at the bottom, while the Bangongo shape is like a head with the old-fashioned coiffure of buffalo's horns. The Bakongo bowl is like the Bambala one, but the stem is straight, and men of importance like

it long, so long that it is quite impossible for them to light it themselves. The mouthpiece is everywhere made of bone. Hemp smoking is unknown among the Bakongo, one would expect that, but even among the Bambala it does not exist, and this is all the more remarkable if one remembers that they are direct neighbours to the Bena Lulua where this vice has been raised to the dignity of a cult. It is practised to some extent among the Bangongo, who say that they have learnt it from the pygmies, who were addicted to it since times immemorial. This statement, confirmed by the pygmies, is of some interest, as it has been generally believed that hemp-smoking had been introduced by the Arabs, who had brought it from the East. Should it be proved that the pygmies are responsible for its propagation, hemp would have to be considered as the oldest narcotic known to the Africans.

As might be expected the Bakongo are good hunters, better by far than the Bushongo. Their dogs are stronger and have more pluck, and in every village there is a sort of a kennelman whom all the dogs know. Every Mukongo has a whistle hanging round his neck, one finds one even on infants in arms. When a man whistles his dog will come, but if the kennelman does so all the dogs of the village will rush to him; he generally has some tit-bit for them, and the animals are very fond of him. Our little fox terrier was very much admired, and chiefs would have bought it at any price we might have asked. Besides dogs, the only domestic animals found amongst the Bakongo were fowls and a very few goats. Their agriculture was limited to bananas, Indian corn and a little



The undulating grassy plains of the country between the Loange and Kasai rivers, inhabited by the Bakongo and Bashilele.

A Bashilele Village within the palisade.

cassava, ground-nuts and yams. They planted, however, a good number of palm trees, and all their villages were surrounded by these; the other plantations were hidden in the woods.

We had noticed something queer about the looks of the women, and it took us some time to find out what it was; at last we realised that they shaved their eyebrows and pulled out their eyelashes; we have seen the operation performed, and it did not appear to cause any more than discomfort. We saw quite a number of men wearing beards.

We soon found that the Bakongo liked to drive a hard bargain, and that they took all possible advantage of the situation which put us, for the sake of our loads, entirely at their mercy. We wanted nearly two hundred men and had twenty. It was not that we travelled in luxury; the twenty men we had could have transported our personal belongings, and there would have been several of them empty-handed. The trouble was all the iron we had to transport. We knew that we could not replenish our supply till we got again into some contact with the civilised world, and we had to have plenty of funds, not only to buy curios, but, if luck favoured us and we got into contact with Goma N'Vula, to buy the favours of that mysterious potentate. As it happened the carriers quickly ate up the money they carried, and we felt the pinch coming. Hilton Simpson and I at last faced the position and talked matters over; we found that we had now not enough money either to get to the Kasai or to return to the Loange. Under those conditions we made up our minds to go on and try to get through on the cheap. We called our men

and asked what they thought about it, and they all agreed. Unfortunately our cook, a good-for-nothing whom we had lately engaged on the recommendation of a fool of a white man, got an ulcer on his leg and declared he could not walk a step. It was no good telling him that I had walked a good number of miles with a poisoned leg, that we would go in small stages, etc., he simply swore he could not budge. One of the Bambala had a bad leg too, worse than his, but he simply cut a staff and hobbled along with it. I tried the threat of abandoning him; but this apathetic creature declared he did not mind and would follow us later; being "civilised" by having lived in European centres since childhood he did not realise, nor would he be convinced of, what this meant. So he had to be carried—which meant not only more expense but also a great deal of trouble, as the natives objected to carting this big heavy man. At last the Bambala, always ready to help, volunteered to convey him in a hammock, and it made me rage every time I saw these slight, small men groan under the load of the fat invalid. If I had known that the day when our journey came to an end he would suddenly walk as well as anyone, and even partake in a dance, there would have been a fine Congo atrocity to record.

Buya was a great favourite with every one, and he, childlike, was the only member of the caravan who did not see the clouds gathering over our heads. He was happy, and thought himself in perfect safety as long as he was with us. He was pained to see me squander my goods in presents to chiefs who showed little goodwill, and, when they returned my gifts stingily, he did not mind telling them what he thought

of them. We used to give the men who carried our loads a little paper with our initials so as to avoid discussions about payment at the end of the journey ; but one day the Bakongo carriers found a little Reckitt's blue, and with this tried to forge these initials on odd scraps of paper they had found in our camp. I refused to pay these and the men became threatening ; I was, however, adamant and defied them to do their worst. Buya took the matter in hand and held forth on the wickedness of cheating in a way which would have honoured the teacher of a Sunday-school, except for the figures of speech in which he indulged. He pointed out to the guilty men that their mothers must have been a very bad lot indeed to bear such children, and as for their fathers, who were legion—I must leave it to the imagination of the reader to imagine what he said about them.

One day I had preceded the caravan, as was my wont, when we did not know how we would be received in the village which was our destination, and Simpson distributed the loads to the Bakongo as they came on, giving each a paper. Having found that they could not imitate our initials well enough to mislead us, these porters conceived the ingenious idea of tearing our papers in two and presenting each half separately for payment. I would not pay till the other half was produced ; naturally they could not identify it, and some men who had really carried loads went empty-handed, while others who had not earned it received their wages. Simpson, when he arrived, found me surrounded by a hostile crowd, armed and ready to use violence. I refused to pay

more than was due, and I do not know to this day how a breach of the peace was avoided, if it was not through Buya's awful language, which overawed them. Bakongo, like Bushongo people, object strongly to obscene words ; Bayanzi, and Buya was a Muyanzi, do not. The kid told them things they had never heard in their lives. Apart from the expressions which brought blush after blush to their cheeks, Buya wished them to reach a very advanced age, till they had lost all their hair and all their teeth, and to do so at once ; he predicted that their dead bodies would be eaten by pigs and make them sick. The funniest part of it was that the impudent little fellow did not shout or show any signs of excitement ; he talked as if it were simply his duty to impart certain information, more in sorrow than in anger. Why did I let him do this ? Because, as things were, it could do us no harm and I was getting angry myself. Candidly it gave me pleasure to hear some one curse the Bakongo, and give them a piece of his mind, when prudence and a wrong upbringing prevented me from doing so.

At last the men left, but our character was besmirched, and we had made a false start in the place.

CHAPTER XXII

THREATENING NATIVES—BUYA TO THE RESCUE—SAVED
BY LAUGHTER

THE name of the village was Kenge, by far the biggest we had yet seen; it had two chiefs: one, it seemed to me, a rather decent fellow, the other, a very old man, had all the appearances of a consummate scoundrel. When all the porters, grumbling and swearing, had left, the old villain came to me and told me that he had changed his mind (we had naturally asked him by messenger if he would have us in his village), and invited us to leave the place at once. I consented to do so—on condition that he provided me with porters to carry my loads. This he refused, and told me peremptorily to clear out without delay. “What about my goods?” I asked. That was my business, not his. It was waste of breath to tell him that I had only come after he had invited me, and that he owed me hospitality; he said that go I must, and that without any further parley. Meanwhile the Bambala had pitched our tents and sat stolidly round our belongings to prevent pilfering. Seeing that his bullying had no effect on me the old chief left with a nasty grin on his ugly face. After a while the younger chief came and gave me some fowls, and I responded with a generous present. When we had

arrived we had found the natives unarmed, but now they were strutting about with bows and arrows ready for use. As night fell we heard a violent palaver going on in the village, the old chief was inciting the men, the younger one pleading for moderation. We went to bed pretty sure that our usual good luck would serve us and slept like logs all night. Nothing special happened next day. The natives refused to sell us food and would not show us where to get water, but we had sufficient supplies, and it was not long before the Bambala found a brook near by. The men had been forbidden to enter the stockade, but Master Buya simply walked in and his youth preserved him from harm. It is true that one warrior, probably in fun, aimed at him with his bow, but Buya, cursing his father, mother and all his ancestors, ordered him to lower it at once—and he did! Then Buya congratulated him, saying, “If you had not obeyed I would have told my master and then, off went your head, you were chopped into bits, and put into the pot! Not that I like Bakongo; I like pig better!” Buya’s reputation as a cannibal was known everywhere, and he was greatly pleased with the horror it inspired.

Buya and my little bitch Sanga had struck up a great friendship; they would sit together and share each other’s meals. Sometimes Buya would pull out a dainty morsel from the dog’s platter and eat it with relish; sometimes, when Buya had his dinner, Sanga would get her share of his food. Now Buya had brought Sanga with him, and, after having brow-beaten the warrior, set her to chase the native dogs. The old chief came up furiously and told him to call the

dog off; Buya informed him that he was the son of a great Muyanzi chief and would not be ordered about by anyone. The old man retorted by telling him that in this place, at any rate, he was the chief. Buya rolled with laughter. "Did you say chief? Ha! ha! ha!" Turning to the natives surrounding them, "Look at that! A chief! That old thing you have to feed on pap, a chief! Ha! ha! ha!" Then, in a sort of confidential tone, he said to his audience: "My father keeps chiefs like this in a pen and fattens them for feast days; then, k-r-r-r, he cuts their throats (performing the gesture) and we eat the chief with manioc and beans. But I wouldn't eat that! Too old for me. I like them young. And what a taste he must have!" Buya spat out, called Sanga and walked off. And the Bakongo? With their hands before their open mouth they marvelled, and, being plucky people themselves, liked the boy for his cheek. But Buya did one better. The younger chief was just coming along, so he walked up to him and said: "Chief, this old slave of yours (pointing at his antagonist) is getting off his head. He claims to be the chief! Ha! ha! ha! Now you, one can see you are a chief; you don't need to tell us. But this . . . with . . . (censored) now insults your guests. It is time you knocked him on the head—he may become dangerous."

There never had been any love lost between the two men, and this address of the child, fortunately for us, raised the old man's anger, and in his folly he scolded the younger chief. When Buya strutted off they were exchanging compliments, but none of them equalled Buya's genius for invective.

This was Buya's day ; he was to shine in all his glory. As evening came, our men gathered round a fire, and we, after a smoke or two, retired to our tents. After a while I got up again to see how things were going on, and when the flame of the men's fire flared up I noticed shadows in the cassava which surrounded our tents ; I pretended not to see them and, taking cover all the time, approached the fire of our men. I wanted to know what they were talking about at this moment, when they might be called any instant, unarmed as they were, to fight for their lives. They formed a circle and listened intently to Sam, our Muluba boy, who was talking quietly. It was this I heard :

" . . . my larder is quite empty and I have nothing to give them ; not a potato, not a yam, not a grain of corn. What am I to do ? "

" Well, Uncle Jackal," the little antelope answered, " we have not always been friends, but now that we have made it up I am going to help you. Run home and fetch a big bag and I will take you to some place where you will find plenty of nice things to eat."

The jackal did as he was told, and soon returned with a bag which looked just like the one the little antelope was carrying. Without more ado they went off, and the little antelope took him to the garden he had seen.

" The man who has planted these crops has gone away for the day," he said. " We can help ourselves freely."

The jackal needed not to be told twice, and soon you could see those two little fellows picking ground-nuts as if they were on their own property. They

picked and picked till both their bags were full. The little antelope rubbed his chin as he looked round the devastated field, and said : " I suppose when the man comes home he will think he has been robbed ! Well, it will be a lesson to him to guard his crops better ! "

The men laughed quietly, with that quaint gurgling sound which is the only polite way of showing glee when a story is told. It has survived amongst civilised people ; if you want to hear it you must surprise a mother laughing to a tiny baby when she thinks herself unobserved. It is the gentlest sound of merriment in the world. Then Sam went on :

The two thieves trotted off. When they reached the jackal's den, the jackal put his bag inside and said politely :

" Uncle Antelope, you need not trouble to take your bag home ; put it in here, I will look after it."

The little antelope put his tongue in his cheek and winked. " Would you though ? And who will look after you ? No, Uncle Jackal, remember what happened to the man who did not look after his garden ; I hope it will be a lesson to him as it has been a lesson to me. I think I will look after my own bag."

This did not suit the jackal a bit. He had quite made up his mind to get the little antelope's share and resented being thwarted in this way. But he put on a smiling face and said :

" Do just as you like, Uncle Antelope, I meant it kindly. But why should you take the bag as far as your house ? Here is a hollow tree, put it in there."

The little antelope saw that he had to give in as

the jackal might any time pounce on him and take by force what he could not get by ruse. So he said :

“You are very kind, Uncle Jackal ; I will take your advice. But mind you guard my bag carefully !”

The jackal could scarcely suppress his laughter, and thought that now, at last, it was his turn to fool the little antelope.

“That is right,” he said, “you just come to-morrow and fetch your bag,” and added aside, “and you will be lucky if you find it !”

The little antelope pretended to go home, but as soon as he was out of the jackal's sight he came back again by a roundabout way and, hiding behind a bush, watched. It was not long before he saw Mrs. Jackal, who had been working in the fields, come home. The jackal told her with roars of laughter how he fooled the stupid little antelope into leaving its bag behind in the hollow tree. “When our guests come, and I have asked everybody, even the little antelope, I will treat them with the little scamp's ground-nuts, and save mine for a rainy day.” Then both Mr. and Mrs. Jackal went off to ask some more guests to dinner. They had no sooner gone when the little antelope rushed to the hollow tree, took his bag out and carried it home. There he emptied its contents and filled it instead with thorns, “wait-a-bit grass” and other stinging and cutting weeds ; then he carried it to the jackal's house and exchanged it for the bag full of ground-nuts, which he carried to and deposited in the hollow tree. He rubbed his hands with pleasure over his well-accomplished task and trotted happily home.

There was a great gathering of beasts that evening at the jackal's house, and as everybody brought calabashes and calabashes of palm-wine the company was very gay. The jackal then stole to the hollow tree, and thinking he had got the little antelope's bag, brought his own home and asked his guests to help themselves freely.

"Tuck away, Uncle Hyena, have a few more, Uncle Baboon. Don't be shy, Uncle Antelope, help yourself freely, as if they were your own," he said with a giggle, and the little antelope took one heap after the other. It did not take very long to empty the bag. The guests thanked their host, and all went away except the little antelope who purposely hung about to see what was going to happen. The jackal, always greedy, said to his wife, "Now that we have eaten the little antelope's ground-nuts, let us taste our own." He went to the bag, but as soon as he thrust his hand into it he withdrew it all covered with blood; the thorns had stung him, the "wait-a-bit" grass had cut him, and he shrieked with pain.

Then the little antelope came into the house and asked, "What is the matter, brother?"

The jackal flew at him: "You thief, you have stolen my ground-nuts!"

"I have not," said the little antelope, "I just fetched mine to save you the trouble of guarding them."

"And now I have given all my lovely ground-nuts away! There is nothing left for me!" lamented the jackal. "You made me give my own away, you rascal!"

"Did you not say they were yours? Well, so they were!" grinned the little antelope.

"But I meant them to be yours! I wanted to keep mine and treat the guests to yours!"

"I know you did, but I did not."

"How dared you put these thorns and this cutting grass into this bag?"

"Surely a man may put into his own bag whatever he likes."

"Who gave you permission to put it into my hut?"

"Did you not ask me to do so?"

"I did, but then there were ground-nuts in it!"

"You never said anything about nuts, you just offered to keep my bag for me! What do you want? You asked me to leave you in charge of my bag; I did it. You said to your guests you were giving them your ground-nuts; so you did. You got it all your own way."

Whilst all this talking was going on and the little antelope was angering the jackal, the latter managed to get between his tormentor and the door; now, having him at his mercy, he pounced on him and pinned him to the floor.

"Aha," he shouted triumphantly, "I will eat you instead of the ground-nuts. Wife, bring me at once the biggest knife that I may cut this scoundrel's throat."

Mrs. Jackal brought a knife as big as a sword and as sharp as a razor. Holding his victim down with one hand, the jackal caught hold of the knife with the other, preparing to kill the antelope with one stroke. The little antelope shut his eyes—and then he had an idea.

"Please, dear Uncle Jackal," he whimpered, "be careful with that knife; you might cut me."

"Cut you? I will cut your head off with one stroke!"

"Thank you, Uncle Jackal," said the little antelope, "that is just what I want. I am not afraid to die, but I don't want to suffer. Promise you will kill me with one stroke."

The jackal thought the request reasonable and promised. But when he swung the knife the little antelope said:

"Just a moment. I want to tell you that the skin on my throat is very thick; you must cut with all your might to get through it. Will you then, please hold the knife with both hands and put all your strength into the stroke?"

"That I will," said the jackal, and catching hold of the knife with both hands he raised it and . . .

Here Sam gave a long-drawn whistle and the men held their breath.

The moment the jackal had let go the little antelope to clutch the knife with the other hand too, the slim little fellow had slipped out of his reach, jumped over the head of Mrs. Jackal and was out of the door. There he stopped for a moment and shouted:

"Uncle Jackal, Uncle Jackal, do you know which is the best time to kill a dwarf antelope?"

"Which?"

"When you have got him!" laughed the little imp, and ran straight home.

The men again gurgled, but Buya was so amused that, forgetting good manners, he laughed aloud, and the merry peal of his young voice rang out in the silence of the night like silver bells. It rang out and raised the echo in the little wood, and suddenly dark figures rose in the cassava near our tent. They rose and gasped, then suddenly they sank back into darkness.

To this day I believe that it was this peal of laughter that defeated the Bakongo. There were other things to happen next day, but they were only contributory. What baffled these Bakongo, what overawed them was this: here were a handful of people who had been openly told that they would be killed; there were many hundred warriors who would see to it that any resistance should be absolutely useless. And what did they do? The two pale strangers went into their tents and slept! The Bambala sat round their fire, smoked calmly and listened to stories! And there was this little child, who ought to be hiding somewhere and crying out for his mother, there was this tiny fellow laughing, laughing aloud at an hour when even grown-ups, in the perfect security of their village, keep quiet in fear lest they might provoke some ghost or a malevolent spirit of darkness. This was not natural; these people, acting so unnaturally, must be supernatural themselves, or possessed of uncanny powers which it might be fatal to provoke. Who would dare to go against them?

Thus Buya beat the Bakongo.

CHAPTER XXIII

A TIGHT CORNER—A TOY ELEPHANT—ESCAPE—AN
ANXIOUS TIME—THE BASHILELE—A CLUB

NEXT morning when we came out of our tents we found that all the cassava plants that surrounded them had been cut, the work of the shadows I had seen—I suppose with the idea of giving them an open space that would permit them to attack us from within the stockade. Insults were hurled at us from the village, and Buya was our spokesman to give the necessary answers. The Bakongo were very poor performers; all they could say was that they would kill us. They never rose above strictly parliamentary language; not so Buya. That boy was remarkable for his eloquence and for his power of invective. Now anybody might have thought of comparing the old chief to a baboon, but it required Buya to liken him to the reverse of one. It needed personal acquaintance with a dead crocodile to appreciate the insinuation that the Bakongo possessed the same perfume. What European child of his age, nay, what European who is not a professional naturalist, would have thought of calling the men behind their palisade caddis-worms (because this insect builds itself a shelter of sticks stuck together)?

At noon Simpson and I were sitting near the tent,

when I suddenly observed the old chief stroll up to our improvised kitchen, take the fowls tied up there, and walk straight off with them. I had just time to say hurriedly to Simpson, "Don't look round; the old bounder is stealing our chickens, and if either of us sees it we shall have to shoot him or we are done for." As long as we were supposed to be in ignorance of the insult we could think matters over, but, if it were known that we were cognizant of the theft, hesitation to shoot would have been considered a sign of fear, and would have been followed up by an open attack. We could have put up a fair resistance; we had our sporting repeating rifles and our shot-guns; in a wooden case we had some other cheap rifles with a few cartridges; but we did not have a single man who could have handled one. We were in the centre of a strange country; even should we succeed in getting through it meant the loss of all our precious collections. We had to try to get away peacefully. But how? The Bambala realised how things stood, and never have they shown more pluck than on this occasion. They came up to us, dressed in their best clothes, and asked us to let the enemy come as near as possible when he attacked, then to shoot those who had the best bows and the most arrows; the Bambala would then rush out, get these weapons and fight. "Of course we are few and they are many, but they won't get us cheap." The brave fellows! I remembered a little packet of Reckitt's blue we had, and gave it to them to paint themselves for the battle. They were delighted with it; when the blue lines were drawn on their foreheads they admired themselves with great joy in my shaving-glass. They were quite



A WONDERFUL TOY.

This little elephant played an important part at Kenge when the author was in a tight corner.



BAKONGO COIFFURE.

This consists of plaits closely encircling the head so as to form a cap.

calm and not in the least nervous. Buya was frightfully excited, and brandished a kitchen knife to the common danger. The Bambala took him with them and retired behind our tents.

Now I have to tell a tale which has been told much better before, so I will try to make it as short as possible ; I cannot omit it as it was the turning-point of our fortunes. I had brought with me from Europe a toy elephant which, when wound up, would wave its trunk and walk a few steps ; I meant to exchange it against some curio. It was, however, to save our lives. I went to my tent, took it out of the trunk and found it was in perfect working order. Then I explained my plan to Simpson, who was much amused by it. Soon the younger chief, who had always been well disposed towards us, was prowling round our camp ; I called out to him to come as I had something of great importance to tell him. He looked carefully round to make sure he was not observed and then came, very crestfallen, and obviously perturbed by the turn events had taken. I told him that I knew that it was not through his fault that things had gone wrong, and that I had decided to show my gratitude for his goodwill by giving him advice that would save his life and that of his family and friends. This made him quite nervous, and he anxiously inquired what he was to do. I told him that all those whom he loved must leave the village before nightfall as, provoked by the old chief, I had decided to destroy it—I would not do so myself, but order my elephant to do it. What elephant? Come and see ! I went into the tent, wound up the toy (less than a foot high) and when it walked along a wooden case Simpson

raised the flap of the tent and the clockwork toy appeared in the semi-darkness before the highly excited chief. One look was enough for him; he ran off towards the stockade shouting: "I am going to fetch the chickens, I am bringing them back!"

Half an hour later Kenge was a different place. The Bambala were sitting in the same place, unmoved, apparently indifferent. From the stockade the shrill voice of Buya was audible; he tried to take advantage of the victory by buying a chicken for himself at less than the market price; he got it. Simpson and I were sitting in our deck-chairs, the stolen chickens and about a dozen more at our feet, listening to the supplication of the old chief, who implored us to accept porters, as many as we liked, for the earliest possible date. I told him I was in no hurry, so he whispered that he wanted us to go because he was afraid his people might become hostile. At this I smiled, and waved my hand towards the tent where he knew the mysterious elephant was waiting for a signal to destroy the community. He at once retracted what he had said; of course, there was no question of his people being hostile to such great men as Simpson and me, but he had always understood that we were keen to leave his village, nay the Bakongo country, and he knew of an excellent Mushilele chief who would welcome us with open arms. After a time I condescended to send Mayuyu to this chief the next day and arrange about our coming. He beat the ground with his fists and thanked me most humbly. He was going to tell me some more, but I dismissed him haughtily. I have never seen a man who re-

seemed a beaten dog as much as this old scoundrel who was so arrogant before.

Mayuyu came back from the Bashilele village and reported that the chief seemed very friendly, so I ordered, mind you, *ordered*, not asked, the old chief to have the porters ready for the day after the next. I chose that day because I had decided to send our Bambala next night to the Bashilele with our iron and such goods as might be easily pilfered, and not to trust the Bakongo with them ; I now think it was an unnecessary precaution, which cost me a great deal of anxiety afterwards.

The Bambala, led by Mayuyu, started at one o'clock in the morning so quietly that the villagers knew nothing of their departure. They were expected to be back at about ten or eleven in the morning. At ten we were on the look out for them, at eleven we went to meet them. Nothing was in sight. Then we passed the most terrible time I have ever known. We knew that Badjok slave traders were in the region, and we at once thought they might have kidnapped our men. Neither of us imagined any mischief on the part of the Bakongo ; they had been overawed, we were in their village, and if they had killed our men they would not hesitate to do the same to us before the news reached us. No, it must have been the Badjok. One long hour followed another and still there was no news. We did not talk or work, we just waited. If the Badjok had got our men, what could we do ? We were not far from the frontier and knew nothing of the country. As evening approached I told Simpson that we would have to leave everything in Kenge and start at nightfall in

pursuit, though we did not know in what direction ! At any rate, if the Badjok hurt one hair on the head of the Bambala we would kill, kill, till we were killed ourselves. It was then that I learned how a civilised man can revert to savagery ; there was nothing I would not have done to those who had harmed our faithful companions ; Simpson was no better. We went into our tent to prepare all the ammunition we had and make ready, when the joyful yelping of Sanga announced the return of the lost men. Life again seemed worth while. Mayuyu, who had only once seen the way to Makasu (the Bashilele village) had made a mistake in the dark, and it had taken them hours to find the right road again. The men were tired, but ready to start the next day. They had been well received, and Mayuyu had stayed with another man to look after our things which had been taken by the chief into his own compound.

The porters, more than we wanted, were there before dawn next morning ; I have never seen people gladder to get rid of their visitors, and I have been at many week-end parties. I asked Simpson to go on and make friends with the chief ; I was going to stay till all our luggage had been sent off, ready to beard our old enemy. When the last load had gone, I gladly said good-bye to the place and reached Makasu at about 5.30. There Simpson told me he had had great fun. The Bakongo had taken their payment contentedly and everything was all right till one of the iron boxes came. The Bakongo who brought it threw it down in front of him, and then, without waiting for payment, had run for their lives. He noted it had been forced open, and when he inspected its

contents to see what had been stolen he found the clockwork elephant looking at him! Imagine the fright of the carriers who had tried to rob us! Of course, had they done so, they would have simply thrown the box somewhere into the bush, but when they saw the dreaded elephant, the idea of treating HIM with such scant respect never occurred to them; so they brought it to Simpson and bolted.

I went to see the chief who was exceedingly friendly and made us welcome. Then we went to have some food. Sanga, my little dog, was standing at the village entrance looking down the road towards Kenge. I called her, but she refused to come. So we started eating, but soon Buya came and informed us anxiously that something was wrong with Sanga; he had called her, offered her food, but she absolutely refused to budge. This was most extraordinary behaviour for a dog which generally refused to leave me. I went to her, stroked her, coaxed her; with no effect. I called Mayuyu: had all the men arrived? He thought so, but would go and see. Then we found that one of the Bambala was missing; Sanga was the only one who had noticed it! Of course the other Bambala all volunteered to go in search of him, and about a couple of hours later they brought the lost one back with them. His explanation was simple: "As I was walking along, hunger gripped me, so I lay down to die." A day or so later he was quite well again.

The Bashilele were much handsomer men than the Bakongo: very tall, with fine features, many of the men with long, thick beards. Their hair was shaved, but the men left a tuft on the summit of

their heads, which was allowed to grow a considerable length and was worn fuzzy. Two locks in front of each ear were plaited, and sometimes ornaments, like miniature hoes, were attached to them (Fig. 28). The women received us with a great noise, which resembled motor horns and was produced by a simple funnel, made of half a calabash with its stem, the lips producing the necessary vibration. The music



FIG. 28:—BASHILELE HAIR ORNAMENTS.

thus obtained was more remarkable for its volume than for quality.

Tired of eating chicken, chicken and nothing but chicken, Simpson and I went next evening to get some guinea-fowl, and having shot a few we were proceeding

towards the village when I noticed a few men all going towards a spot where a pole had been erected in the bush. There we found several logs, and on them were men sitting drinking palm-wine. We were at once offered some, and a cup was quickly improvised for our benefit from a leaf. It turned out that we had by chance come to a club! It seems that the men, when they have gathered their palm-wine, are in the habit of congregating like this in the bush; here not only do they meet only people with whom they are in sympathy, but they

are safe from—their wives, who might urge them, if they dawdled in the village over their drink, to hurry home so as not to keep the dinner waiting. I do not know if this custom is traceable to any Christian influence. The villages of the Bashilele were palisaded, but while the Bakongo used vertical poles to fortify their places, those of the Bashilele had only a framework of these stuck in the ground, and the defence rested on the horizontal ones which connected them.

The Bashilele had preserved the type of the conquering race much purer than the Bushongo; they looked decidedly foreign in this part of the world. But their language, their costume, their arts and crafts proved that they were akin to both Bushongo and Bakongo. When I mentioned the name of Woto I created a sensation. Is there a Nyimi Lele, a great chief of the tribe? I do not know, and my experience with inquiries after Goma N'Vula did not encourage inquisitiveness. The people were too friendly to risk a change in their attitude, and I had had trouble enough to last me for some time. I heard later from the Badjok that somewhere in the north there was a great chieftainess who held sway over the whole country; but the Bashilele never mentioned her.

The Bashilele had lovely carvings, and we purchased quite a good number of them. We did not, however, want to stay long in this village, as it was very small and we were afraid of becoming a burden to the people. We were told that there was another village of the same name at some distance, so I sent Mayuyu with the chief's son to ask if our visit would

be acceptable there. He brought us a message assuring us of a hearty welcome. As it was out of the question in so small a place to raise sufficient porters to carry our loads, we sent some on with the Bambala, and then, the next day, transferred ourselves to the place marked on the map as Makasu II.

CHAPTER XXIV

A PLEASANT RECEPTION—A RUSE—HELPED BY THE
WOMEN—THE BADIJOK—AN ENTERTAINMENT

THE charming young lady who claims the right of criticising my manuscript tells me that the book was just beginning to get interesting, when I spoiled every thing with that silly old elephant. She was looking forward to some fine fighting, cunning stratagems and a surprising victory, after some awful bloodshed and the slaying of the old chief, when all ends happily. I admit the justice of the reproach, and the next time I shall arrange things better. But now, among the Bashilele, there was no question of melodrama; our life was a perfect idyll. The people of Makasu II were as amiable as those of Makasu I, and as for the next village, Kitambi, it was just the place for a person recovering from a nervous break-down. The delightful old chief, Luparakwe, did not know what to do to make everything pleasant for us, and his people took their cue from him. We stayed for a few days, and then mentioned to the chief that it was time for us to move on. "Why do you want to leave us?" he asked astonished. "Is there anything you are wanting? Just tell me; I will see to it that you get it. Have you enough food? I hope the people don't make a noise at night when you want to sleep.

I am expecting some friends who are coming to sell curios."

I told him that we had everything that we required, but that we wanted to get back to our own people. He remonstrated, asked us to stay on just a few days—and finally we had to give in. One day we received a deputation from a Badjok chief who had a village in these parts, asking us to come and see him; as this brought us nearer to the Kasai we sent a message that we would do so. I asked the chief for porters; he put me off on some pretence; I reiterated my request, and he answered by repeating his offer to keep us for ever with him! He did his best to achieve this; we could have everything but porters. At last I got them, at the price of committing a very mean action.

We were sitting in the village when I took a photograph out of my pocket; it represented my dear little friend Margaret Joyce, aged about one. I looked at it for some time, when one of the women standing near by glanced over my shoulder. She at once recognised it as the picture of a child, a white child! No such thing had ever been seen in Bashilele land! Might she take it into her hand? Friends were hastily summoned, and the child was declared the most lovely one that ever walked the earth. The women got frightfully excited over it; they naturally assumed that it represented my daughter. It was then that I did the mean thing. I sighed deeply and told them that years had passed since I had seen that wonderful child, that I was dying to see it again—but how could I? The Bashilele of Kitambi, however kind they were, would not carry my loads, and

I could not get home. Thereupon one of the women shouted to the crowd; her appeal was received with a torrent of applause and then she turned to me:

“Mingenja, you want to see your child. You shall see your child. To-morrow morning, if the men refuse to carry your loads, we women will do it. Won’t we?” And the women shouted wildly that they would. As for me, I felt the lowest dog in Africa; I longed to get up and shout: “I, the civilised man, am a liar and not worthy to lick your feet!” But I did nothing of the sort. After all, there was no fear that these good women would learn the truth, and I am sure their kind hearts rejoiced at the idea that they would help to bring father and daughter together. It was not true, but as long as they believed in it this was of no consequence to them. It mattered to me, more than I can say, and even to this day, when I think of it, I blush with shame. I have done worse things in my life than this, after all, innocent deception; but I have never done one that has haunted me so relentlessly.

Early next morning there they were, the women of Kitambi; but the men, shamed by their wives, turned up too, and so we started soon to leave this hospitable people. The dear old chief insisted on coming with us, to see us well installed in the next village, a very small one, but where the people did their best for us. We were told that there was a big Bashilele village near that of the Badjok which was our destination, and that Kateia, its chief, was a great man amongst his people.

The chief of the Badjok was called Mayila. He came to meet us and for this solemnity had donned

two pairs of trousers, three shirts above these (not tucked modestly away), and other finery. Sanga, always so condescendingly friendly with the natives, shivered with rage at the sight; she always shared my aversion to European clothes on black people. Buya, on the other hand, was much impressed, and treated Mayila with the deference a millionaire deserves—or usually gets. The village was an important one, but had only recently been established, and was obviously a make-shift.

The Badjok, or Badjoko, or Kioko, as they are indifferently called, originate from the highlands, where the Luando, Kwango and Kasai take their sources; they are akin to the Luchaze and Lobale people and strangers in the Congo basin, inasmuch as they belong rather to the southern than the central Bantu. They are famous as smiths, traders and hunters: Badjok means, of course, the elephant people. The occupation of hunting and trading develops the spirit of adventure, and the Badjok did not delay in showing imperialistic ambitions. Invited by the King of Lunda to hunt elephants in his country, they soon made themselves quite at home there and tried to take a leading part in the affairs of the kingdom to such an extent that the natives had good reason to regret their hospitality. In their excursions for trade and the chase they have a remarkable organisation: a part of the tribe, under the leadership of a minor chief, emigrates towards a previously explored place; instead of proceeding in masses they divide into small groups, which process facilitates their pursuit of elephants, and allows them to live on the country without being a burden to the



1. A Mudjok. These people are the gypsies of Africa, but possess a strong central government.
2. The innocent looking little girl in front has just stabbed a boy friend who offended her.
3. and 4. Azande types. These people, originally from Lake Chad, conquered the Baluba and laid the foundation of the Bushongo nation.

inhabitants. All the while they remain in communication with each other, and such is their knowledge of the country that they can time themselves to reach their destination at the same time. There a village is established, like the one we were visiting now. From this village small caravans overrun the country to shoot and to trade. They have a very bad reputation as slave traders. They have overrun the whole southern frontier of the Belgian Congo and penetrated, as mentioned previously, as far as the Sankuru. Farther west their progress was stopped by a defeat inflicted on them by the Bakwese and the Bapinji. They are an ugly people, and their looks are not improved by the great quantity of finery, like bracelets, anklets, ear-rings and diadems, with which they like to adorn themselves. Their very strong national spirit produces the solidarity and loyalty to each other which secures them safety, where other strangers would run the greatest risk. To avenge an insult to a single member the whole tribe is ready to rise, fight and die to the last man. They begin travelling at a very early age, and adults have an excellent knowledge of the geography of their part of the world. They are aggressive, and the aggressive spirit is noticeable in quite small children of both sexes. A sweet little girl of eight, when a naughty boy tried to rob her of a small present I had given her, simply knifed him; she did not scratch him, oh no: she stuck the weapon to the hilt into him. Their elders considered this as quite natural; surely you could not expect the poor child to give up a thing which was her very own?

It is the custom amongst the Badjok that a woman,

when she has passed the time of bearing children, should return to her own clan. As a matter of fact marriage is considered as the loan of a woman to her husband; consequently should the wife die whilst she stays with her husband he is obliged to pay a considerable indemnity, amounting sometimes to ten slaves, to her rightful owner, the head of her clan. It is for this reason that many a Badjok will marry slave girls, so as to make sure that his wife and children will be with him to cheer and help him in his old days. Their children are all free, and suffer no disadvantage from their mother's status. Another reason for these slave marriages is that divorce can be obtained by either husband or wife if both are free, while a slave wife has no right to claim relief though her husband is entitled to repudiate her.

On our way to the village we had noticed a pole, erected in the bush, on which a Portuguese flag was flying; we thought it was the meeting-place of a Bashilele club, but were told that it was the grave of a Mudjok, who had recently died. The corpse is buried in a sitting position, with crossed legs, leaning backwards against a support; the face is always turned westwards. Death, except a violent one, is attributed to God, Kalunga, whom the Badjok frequently invoked in our presence by prayer. His name is also used as a greeting. Besides praying to God for success in their enterprises, the Badjok resort to magic; the magician is a very conspicuous person as he is painted red and white. The charms with which he works are of the same colours; they are kept in a basket and consist of an extraordinary mixture of objects, trophies and parts of animals

forming the major part. The client has to repeat after the wise man certain magic formula, the basket is shaken, and the answer is read from the objects that appear at the surface.

Though the Badjok are principally hunters, they are great agriculturists, and their temporary village was surrounded by well-kept plantations. Near it they grew a considerable amount of good tobacco, which they used in the pipe as well as in the form of snuff; they denied ever smoking hemp, but a great quantity of it grew near Mayila's hut—probably as an ornament! This was the first place where we saw cotton grown, and many a man was walking about in the village spinning with a whirl. The plantations are in the women's care, men are mostly engaged hunting. They use firearms, the quality of which can be judged by the fact that they cost, including transport from Europe, duties, etc., about four shillings! With these terrible weapons, loaded with a heavy charge, several attack the elephant: the first fires his gun after having stalked as near as possible, then runs; now the second hunter discharges his weapon, then the third. Meanwhile the first has reloaded and the game starts anew, till the animal, peppered with iron and brass slugs, succumbs. The meat is used to buy vegetable food from the natives, the ivory is carried off by the Badjok. To obtain carriers cheap, slaves are bought who, at that time at any rate, found a ready market at St. Paul de Loanda, where they were purchased for the plantations of Principe and St. Thomé as "indenture labourers." I am told that this has been stopped now, though disquieting rumours have quite recently

reached those who endeavour to put an end to this disgraceful traffic.

There is no peace for the wicked ; we soon noticed that we must belong to this category. Peace is a thing one vainly seeks in a village of the Badjok : in daytime there is always some one quarrelling with some one else, and at night it is the fashion to converse at great distances ; this requires violent shouting, and makes sleep quite impossible. It was our bad luck that when we were in great need of rest a village festival was taking place. First there was a lot of shooting, and Mayila explained to us that it would be considered a favour if we supplied him with the necessary means to break our tympana ! Then the drums struck up : there were different kinds and they were manipulated with considerable vigour. I was much interested to find here the humming drum, an instrument I had observed the last time far away to the north in the equatorial forest, amongst some Batetela. This instrument of torture looks like an ordinary drum, about two feet high and one foot in diameter, prettily ornamented with carved designs with two membranes. On one side it has a hole into which a funnel-like calabash is fixed with decayed rubber ; towards the narrow end of this horn a hole is covered partly with the web of a certain spider, and when the drum is beaten the air, forced and sucked alternately through it, produces a sound not unlike the humming of an aeroplane flying low.

For the dance men and women were drawn up in separate lines and simultaneously performed the following step : the right foot was put forward, then backward, then forward again, and the dancer took

up a statuesque attitude ; the same thing was performed with the other foot and a different posture was taken ; then, it was again the turn of the right foot. The dancers formed a circle round the drummers who beat their instruments with great energy. This went on for hours and we looked on. What good was it to try to escape to bed ? Finally, there was a treat in store for us : the two ugliest females of the village performed a *pas de deux* for our sole benefit ! The only thing that made us appreciate it was that it marked the end of our sufferings. How we longed for the peace and quiet of those savage Bashilele !

CHAPTER XXV

THE BASHILELE—TEMPTATION—ASSAULT AND BATTERY— THE LAST DAY'S MARCH

WE got a message from Mikope (a pure Bushongo name!), a big Bashilele chief, who informed us that he had expected and was always ready to receive us with open arms; if we had no porters he would send us as many men as we wanted. We both wanted very badly to go, once more, back to the peace of the wilds, but we were in duty bound to investigate the Badjok customs, so we had to give it up. Then Kateia, the chief of the big Bashilele settlement near by, came and asked why we had not gone to his place; did we not like the Bashilele? Like them! Why, Simpson and I would have given anything to get out of this place, back to those amiable people; but how could we explain our reasons? Kateia's village was so big that we thought he might be the paramount chief, but I offered him, as a test, some brass, and he would not even touch it, so I knew that he was not; this metal is the monopoly of Goma N'Vula and Nyimi Lele, as it used to be that of the Nyimi of Bushongo. We parted good friends, and I hope the Bashilele think as kindly of us as we think of them.

At Mayila's we did not get much for the Museum; we were nearing the end of our journey and were

pretty well out of cash, and the Badjok asked prices they would never get at Stevens'. Mayila came one evening and told us that he would help us, get people to sell us things cheap if—and then he asked me in whispers to take him to our tent, as he wanted to inform us of a very secret matter. When we were there, and he had peeped several times out to make sure he was not observed, he formed his hand into the shape of a cup, lifted it to his mouth and then, with a sudden jerk, raised his elbow. Now, I am not good at Portuguese, but I rather guessed he wanted a drink. We had half a bottle of sherry and some brandy in a flask. I gave him a glass of sherry. He smelt it and turned away with disgust: vinho! Not for him! Had we, had we—he cautiously peeped out of the tent—the air was clear—had we any aguardiente? Well, I thought of the British Museum and gave him some in a glass. He gulped it down and smacked his lips; then he held out his glass to be refilled. I told him he would have the rest if he kept his word. He flew to the village and returned with a humming drum. What would I give for that, a bale of cloth, ten kegs of powder? No, I had no such things, but I would give him the rest of the brandy. He hesitated, but when I held the flask tentatively under his nose he succumbed; I broke the law of the country by giving spirits to a native, but I got my drum! Then Mayila waxed sentimental. This was a bad country. A man might die of thirst, and all he would get to drink would be water or palm-wine. Portugal for him! The last time he had been at St. Paul he had been drunk for a fortnight on a stretch. I might ask his men if he had been sober for

a minute during that fortnight. The memory of those happy days brought tears to his eyes.

No book on the Congo can be written without at least one atrocity ; up to now I had not succeeded in getting one, but at last fortune favoured me. That which follows is the authentic account of one, all the more credible as it is the villain of the piece who makes his confession.

Simpson and I were sitting near our tent teaching Badjok children to make soap-bubbles ; were we not the apostles of civilisation ? We heard some loud voices in the village, but that was so common an occurrence that we paid little heed to it. Somehow, I listened after a time and distinguished the voice of a Mulaba woman begging for mercy ; then I heard blows. I jumped up and ran in the direction of the sound, and there I saw a woman being tied up and dragged away by some men. I rushed there and kicked them away. I asked what was the matter. The woman explained that the man standing by was her husband who had just sold her to the Badjok. I asked him if it was true ; he told me it was not my business. I made it so. Was this woman his wife ? Yes. Had he sold her as a slave ? Yes. Then I lost my head. At first my blows were pretty correct, but as I warmed to the job I became less regular ; hang it all, this was not a contest at the N.S.C., this was assault and battery pure and simple. When I had finished there was no skin left on my knuckles, and the scoundrel's face looked like a black cauliflower with tomato sauce. He had to be carried away, while I took the woman to my camp.

The Badjok looked on quietly though they might

have become unpleasant. It seems that they had not yet paid the price, so they did not consider it their business to interfere ; besides, they must have heard of De Grunne's little exploit, and did not want to get into trouble with the state force. Though we were still in no-man's-land we were only forty miles from the edge of it, and I had already sent Mayuyu as a messenger to the nearest European factory. My presence was known, that saved our expedition from shipwreck in the last minute ; for my hot temper might have caused us to lose the fruit of our labours.

Why did I speak at all about the Badjok when I am only concerned with the Bushongo and their kindred ? I want the reader to compare this people, who have for two hundred years been in contact with civilisation, with the savage Bashilele ; let him draw his own conclusions.

After leaving Mayila we marched for nearly eleven hours over the Kasai-Loange watershed, the hills reaching over six hundred feet above the valleys. We camped in a tiny village.

And then came the day of our last march, which was, alas, to be my last trek in Africa. The " kio-ki " of the emerald cuckoo told us that we were still near our halting place, though the village was hidden from our view by the long grass, heavy laden with dew. The air was sharp ; the sun, just rising above the horizon, tinged the country with gold, but had not yet conquered the chill of the night. Along the ever-winding path, scarcely broad enough for our feet, the grass became gradually thinner, and between the dry stalks, parched by the drought of four rainless months, the first fresh blades, begotten by an early thunder-

storm, began to show. Now we went slightly downhill, and our prospect extended farther and farther; below us lay an endless carpet of tender green—like an English meadow; a few weeks hence, when the rains set in for good, this will be a swamp, but now it was just damp enough to nourish a luscious vegetation. But where shall we be a few weeks hence?

Something glittered in the rays of the sun. There, quite near, a majestic water-buck raised its head to see who intruded on its domain. It hesitated for a moment: its nest was so cosy and warm, the air still chilly—but it was man, its eternal foe! It rose gracefully, galloped a few steps, looked round and was gone.

The caravan in front of us, like a long snake, wound its way down the slope. The sun got hotter and hotter, the men felt life pulsating with increasing energy in their veins. The Bambala knew that this was the end of the great adventure of their lives; after this, a steamer would take them to their homes to tell of all the wonders they had seen and of some others. . . . One of them started a song. The sound alarmed something in the bush, something indistinct which fled with rapid strides. The other carriers took up the tune, and I, making light of my dignity, fell in with the familiar chorus. How could I help singing when the world was so beautiful?

As we reached the bottom of the valley we entered a forest. The dense tree-tops excluded the sun, and the smell of decaying vegetation weighed heavily in the air. There was no sound but the rustling of the dead leaves under the men's feet, yet one felt the presence of innumerable living beings. There!

From the top of a tree a monkey looked bewildered down on us. We saw but one, but the knocking of a load against a tree-trunk provoked a wild stampede along the well-known road amongst the boughs. Then there was again silence till, above the trees, invisible to the eyes, a flight of parrots, progressing towards its feeding-ground, sounded alternate croaks and whistles. Nothing could be imagined farther away from civilised life; still, the idea of returning to it always intruded. Why, was not that the huff-huff of a railway engine? Of course, a hornbill travelling above our heads. Now, that sounds like the spectre of a London cab-whistle! Parrot-pigeons. The bell-like rich call of the giant plantain-eater drove the phantoms of Europe away, and then there was nothing but the rustling of the leaves.

“Kio-ki,” called the emerald cuckoo, and announced that we were approaching a glen not far from a human habitation. The trees grew thinner and the sun was filtering through their tops. Suddenly the men in front stopped; crouching down they made signs with their hands. Hilton Simpson took his rifle and advanced cautiously. I saw the men point while he was scanning the gaps between the trees. The pipe which was hanging slackly from the corner of his mouth went suddenly up with a jerk: he had seen and set his teeth. After two years’ constant living together one gets to know the slightest mannerisms of one’s companion. He leant forward, whilst the men were biting their fists so as not to shout with excitement. A shot rang out followed by wild trampling; the men scattered. I saw something tearing towards my friend who had never moved.

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I saw it approach, breaking its way towards him through the undergrowth—then there came the second shot, there was a crash and the men howled with joy at the sight of the dead buffalo—which meant a supply of meat for the rest of the journey. Simpson lit his pipe which had gone out ; it always did on such occasions.

All of a sudden we came in sight of the river—the Kasai, our goal, rolling its black waters between the wooded banks. We could see clearly on a strip of golden sand something long, golden itself, lying near the water. The crocodile suddenly raised its ugly head and smoothly, without a sound, glided into the water, changing to light green as it glittered in the sun. A little farther a herd of hippopotami were playing. A marabou stork, this caricature of a bird, waded solemnly near the bank. It lifted one leg and kept it suspiciously in the air before it proceeded another step. Suddenly its head disappeared in the water ; when it rose again something silvery was glittering in its huge beak. The fish was thrown into the air and dexterously caught, head first ; then it slid down into the bird's gullet.

Like an heraldic bird, motionless, with outspread wings, a diver sat on a rock. From the bluish grass came the melancholy grunt of a hippo, the fishing eagle shrieked sharply, while the alarm given by the chattering plovers raised a rosy flock of cranes against the pale blue sky.

And then we perceived some whitewashed mud-houses : an outpost of Europe.

We had reached our journey's end.

APPENDIX

BUSHONGO civilisation was fated to remain a great "might have been"; had Shamba Bolongongo been succeeded by princes worthy of him, the history of the black race might have been a different one. Though the Bushongo failed in their cultural mission, they still played an important role in Africa; it is they who gave the impetus, directly and indirectly, to a number of migrations in the south and west, and who stemmed the tide flowing to Central Africa from all directions. Even if we discard the hypothesis that Ilunga (or Ihunga) was a Bushongo prince, there can be no doubt that it was under pressure from this people that he and his followers set out on their expedition to the south (about 1625) which resulted in the foundation of the Lunda empire. It was his usurpation that drove Kinguri Bangala west, where the latter conquered some Bapende tribes and formed the Imbangala nation; the Bapende who refused to submit to his rule fled north towards the Kasai till their progress was stopped by the Bakongo. Ilunga was also the cause of Muzumba Tembo migrating with his people to the Luando to found the Songo nation, while N'Dumba Tembo led a section of the Bongo to the sources of the Kasai and the Kwango to form the nucleus of the Badjok, the most truculent people Africa has known.

In their reckless expeditions the Badjok penetrated

as far as the lower Sankuru, but were driven back to Wissmann Falls; for a time they threatened the existence of the Bashilange, and further west they cut their way across Lunda and followed the course of the Kwilu northwards till they were defeated on the banks of the Luana and driven south beyond the 7° S. During their progress they had driven the Balua north to the Kwango, whence the Southern Bambala had to flee down the Kwilu valley to their present abode, and in their retreat the Badjok were followed by the Bakwese, who occupied both banks of the Luchima. This upheaval affected all neighbouring tribes.

The southward push of tribes is marked by the penetration of the lower Kwilu by the Bayanzi from the Ubangi and the Bahuana from the Alima. Further east, sections of the Basongo Meno and Bankutu were pressed across the Sankuru by the wedge-like advance from the east of the Batetela; the Basongo Meno were absorbed in the Bushongo nation, while the Bankutu were driven back by them to the forest of the Lukenye, where their struggle with the Batetela still continues. Further east the Batetela succeeded in breaking through the Baluba, many of whom fled west till their progress was arrested by the Bushongo bulwark.

The map shows clearly that, while the surrounding peoples were swaying to and fro, Bushongo stood unmoved in the centre of Africa, like a rock amidst the billows of a stormy sea.

MAP FOR "ON THE TRAIL OF THE BUSHONGO"



